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THE SMART SET

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THE SMART SET

A MAGAZINE OF CLEVERNESS

Vol. XXIV

MARCH, 1908

No. 3

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SIMEON TETLOW'S SHADOW

By Jeannette Lee

I

IT was turning dusk in the office, though it was scarcely three o'clock and outside the sun was still shining, beyond the busy streets. The two men sitting on opposite sides of the small room bent closer to their desks. The younger glanced up and rose to turn on the electric light. The little scowl that had begun to form itself on the face of the older man changed to a look of relief. His pen moved faster over the paper.

The older man was Simeon Tetlow, president of the R. & Q. Railroad. It might almost be said that he *was* the road. Its minute ramifications and its great divisions were hardly more than the nerves and arteries that threaded Simeon Tetlow's thin frame. And the orders that went out from the tiny office high up in the big block were the play of his flitting finger-tips upon the keyboard of the whole clanking system. The tiny shriveled figure gave no hint of the power that ticked carloads of live stock and human beings to their destination and laid its hand upon roads half dead or dying, or alive and kicking, sweeping them gently into the system, with hardly a gulp.

Simeon Tetlow was an iron man, wiry and keen—an intellect without heart or soul or conscience, his co-workers would have told you. Each new road absorbed, each influx of power, seemed only to tighten a spring somewhere inside that shot the bolt. He could work day and night without tiring; and that was the reason, in part, why at forty-two he was president of the R. & Q. road, and the reason why at forty-

two his hand, when it reached out for its abstemious glass of water, trembled so that it was quickly withdrawn. No one knew the man. No one guessed the nervous horror that often racked the small frame driven relentlessly by its big brain.

He reached out for a slip of paper that lay at hand and ran his eye over it, jotting down a few figures. Then he pushed it to one side and went on writing. The younger man came across the office and laid another slip of paper on the desk. He took the one that had been pushed aside, made a memorandum on it, and filed it in a pigeonhole at the right. He was a short young man, with broad shoulders and a round face. The face as it bent above the slip of paper had a dull look. There was a kind of patience in it not usual in so young a man, and when he turned his eyes to his employer they glowed with a clear light, as if something were shining behind them.

"What is it, John?" The man reached out a nervous, groping hand. His gaze had not left the page before him.

"This one next, sir." The young man touched the outstretched hand with the slip of paper.

"Yes, yes." It was almost testy.

The other returned to his desk and the scratching pens raced with the minutes.

A call-boy entered with a handful of letters. The young man took them and ran them through his fingers. He arranged them in piles, reserving a part for himself. These he read, making notes and filing them rapidly. One letter, the one at the bottom of the pack,

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was not addressed to the great corporation, but—in a fine, small hand—to "John Bennett." He read this one last, looking thoughtfully at the lines and folding it with slow fingers. The patient look was still in his face, but the light of the eyes was gone. It seemed to have sunk back, leaving the flesh dull and heavy.

His employer glanced up suddenly. His quick eye sought the electric bulb with a flash of impatience, and returned to its work.

The young man rose and turned on more lights. He moved about the room, putting things away for the night.

Simeon Tetlow finished his letters and pushed them from him. The young man came across and began to gather them up. His dull face came in range of his employer's eye.

"Give those I've marked to Hanscom. Have the rest ready in the morning. I shall dictate."

"Yes, sir." The young man finished gathering them up.

The man glanced again, half-impatiently, at the heavy face. The room seemed suddenly gloomy, in spite of the red-hot wires looping the light about them.

The young man brought a hat and coat and laid them beside his employer. "May I speak to you a minute, sir?" he asked, as he put them down.

The other glanced again, sharply, at his face. "Go ahead." His hand was reaching for the hat.

"I shall have to hand in my resignation, sir," the young man said slowly, as if repeating something he had learned by heart.

The hand on the hat drew back. "What's that?" He laughed curtly and shot a look of suspicion at the impassive face. "More money?"

The face flushed. "No, sir." He hesitated a little. "My mother is sick."

"Umph!" The man's face cleared. "You don't need to resign for *that*." He did not ask what was the matter with the mother. He had not known that John had a mother. She seemed to be springing into existence very

inconveniently. "Get a nurse," he said.

"She has had a nurse. But she needs me, I think." He did not offer more details.

The older man shrugged his shoulders a little—a quick shrug. He pushed forward a chair with his foot. "Sit down. Your father dead?" quickly.

"No, sir. But—father is—father." He said it with a little smile. "She's never had anybody but me," he went on quickly. "She's been sick ever since I was a little thing, and I've taken care of her. It frets her to have a woman around. She doesn't wash the dishes clean, and her cooking isn't really very good." He was smiling a little as he said it.

The man shot a quick look at him. "You're going home to wash dishes?"

"Yes, sir."

"Um-m." The fingers played a little tune on the desk. "I'll raise you twenty-five a month. Get a better nurse."

The boy shook his head. "I'm afraid it wouldn't do." He was hesitating. "I think she misses me."

"Umph! Very likely!" The man glanced at him over quick spectacles. "What's the matter with her? Sit down." He touched the chair again with his foot.

The young man sat down. "We don't know what it is. She cannot walk—cannot stand—a good deal of the time—and sometimes she suffers. But it is a kind of nervousness that is hardest to bear. She cannot lie quiet. Something seems to drive her."

The man nodded. His fingers opened and closed. "What else?" he said brusquely.

"That's all—except that it quiets her to have me around. I can get work in Bridgewater and do the housework nights and mornings."

The man was scowling at him intently.

"It's what I've always done, till I came here," he said quickly.

"Washed dishes and cooked and made beds?"

"Yes, sir."

"It's no work for a *man*."

"I know." The dull face smiled a little. "The boys always called me 'Sissie Johnny.'"

"Umph! I'm glad they did! . . . 'Sissie Johnny'!" He smiled grimly and took a card from the desk before him, holding it a minute in his fingers, snapping it back and forth. "Has she ever seen a specialist?"

The young man shook his head. "No, sir."

The man wrote a few words on the card and blotted it quickly. "Take her to see Dr. Blake. He is the best nerve specialist in five hundred miles. If she isn't well enough to go to him, have him come to her. I'll pay the bill." He thrust himself into his hat and coat and got himself out of the room, shrugging nervously.

The young man stood with the card in his hand, looking at it, a little smile on his lips. Then he went about, turning out all the bulbs but one and putting away papers and arranging the room for the night.

It was a small, rough room—hardly more than a corner cut off from the top floor by board partitions. The rest of the floor, outside, was used only for storage. Simeon Tetlow had achieved here what he wanted—complete solitude. There was, on the first floor, a magnificent apartment with lordly mahogany chairs, a baize-covered table and oil paintings, where twice a year he met his directors; and on the floor above it was a spacious room bearing on its panel the bronze token, "President's Office." It was occupied at present by three young lady typewriters who clacked their machines and arranged their hair and adjusted the shades on the plate-glass windows to suit their convenience, while in the little room at the top of the building the president of the corporation hunched himself over a four-dollar desk and scowled at the dim light that came through the half-sized windows. For three days after it was finished Simeon Tetlow occupied the spacious room below designed for the president of the corporation. Then he gathered to-

gether his few belongings and fled to the top. His gigantic brain could only work when free from distraction. The mere sense that someone might rap, even on the outer door of the stately office, paralyzed him, and his nervous frame, once set a-jangle, trembled, and palpitated for hours. The mere forbidding of intrusion was not sufficient. Some well-meaning idiot, laden with news of importance, would break over the command, and hours of careful thought would be whirled aloft in the smoke of Simeon's wrath. He fled to the loft, dropping, as it were, a trap-door behind him. No one was to follow—unless summoned. No literary man was ever more jealous of solitude. But no mere literary man could think a railroad into existence or quench a wheat crop with a nod. If Simeon Tetlow's body had matched his brain, there would have been no limit to his power. As it was, he remained a mighty general without an army, a head without hands and feet. The details of life frustrated him at every point. He could meet his directors, serene in the knowledge that the road was prospering beyond all bounds. He could carry to them the facts and figures and proofs of prosperity—in his head. But the papers that recorded these facts, the proofs in black and white, were never forthcoming at the right moment. They took to themselves wings—of paper; they flitted and skulked and hid; they lay on the top of the pile before him and grinned at him, their very faces changed to a diabolic scorn that he should not know them.

This was the Simeon Tetlow of three years ago. Then there entered, one morning, in response to his summons for a call-boy, a short, square youth with a dull face. Simeon did not note him as he came in. He forgot that he had called for a boy. His mind was busy with projects of import. When it came back, with a start, he recognized that someone had been with him, for ten minutes or more, who had not worried and irritated him by merely being alive. He shot a keen glance at the dull face. The light of the eyes

was turned to him, waiting to serve him.

After that Simeon summoned the boy again and again, on one pretext or another. He made excuses to see him. He advanced him from post to post.

At last, about a year ago, he nodded at a desk that had been installed, overnight, across the room: "You are to work there and your pay will be raised a hundred."

The boy took possession of the desk with as little stir as if he had received some casual order. He did not ask what his work was to be, and Simeon Tetlow did not tell him. The big brain found hands and feet—almost, it might seem, lungs and a few other useful, vital organs—and it used them, as it had used the nervous, shaking body before, relentlessly. For the first time in his life Simeon found his papers ready to his hand. He attended his first directors' meeting, sitting at the head of the green baize table, like a man in a dream. The right paper slipped to his finger-tips and lingered there, the figures formed themselves in seemly ranks and marched up and down the green baize parade in orderly file. The effect upon the directors was, at first, a little startling. They had become wonted to Simeon—hurried, gasping and impatient—and to dividends. They were almost afraid of these cold facts and figures. They looked at them cautiously, through gold-rimmed glasses, received their dividends—and took heart.

Each day some new comfort found its way to Simeon's desk. The morning that the box of elastic bands appeared there was a holocaust of joy among the papers. He used nearly the whole box the first day. He had never owned an elastic band before. He was president of the great corporation, but it had not occurred to him that he had a right to elastic bands. He slid them up and down his nervous fingers in sheer energy of delight. But he did not mention them to John, nor John to him. It was John who provided the new letter-file that cut the work in half, and had the grimy windows washed till they

shone like plate, and arranged the desk 'phone so that Simeon could dictate to the stenographer, three floors below, without knowing or caring, who sat at the other end taking his crisp words with hurried, compliant fingers. Hitherto dictating had burdened Simeon's life. He had written dozens of letters himself rather than endure the presence of a stenographer for even half an hour; and the sound of a girl clacking drove him wild.

The letters that were not dictated into the telephone were written in John's round, conscientious-looking hand. If there were anything that one human being could do for another that was not done in the office Simeon did not know what it was—nor did John. A clothes-brush that brushed them twice a day hung by Simeon's hat and coat, and if Simeon's neckties were still shabby and his collars a little frayed it was because John had not yet discovered the remedy. Some days a luncheon appeared on Simeon's desk, and some days he went out to luncheon; and he could not have told which, except that it was always the thing that he would have done had he devoted hours of thought to it all.

He did not give thanks to John, and John did not expect them. The lamps in his eyes had not been lighted for that nor for money. . . .

He went about the room now in his slow, considerate way, attending to each detail of locking up, as carefully as if he were not to be first on the ground in the morning. . . . He would return to start the day. Later—perhaps at noon—he would slip away. That would make least trouble. . . . To come in the morning and find him gone!—John felt, through all his short, square figure, the shock to the nervous, quivering one. He did not need to reason it out. He did not even know that he thought it. It was an instinct—born the first day he came into Simeon Tetlow's office and saw the thin figure seated before its chaotic desk wrestling its way through mighty things. . . . He had thought of his mother as he stood there waiting

for orders. She had fairly driven him away. "Go and be a *man*!" she had said; "I will ruin you." And she had smiled at him courageously. . . . And he had come away, and had taken the first thing at hand—a call-boy, kicking his heels against a bench with a dozen others. And this was his employer. . . . So he had stood waiting when Simeon Tetlow had looked up and seen the lamps aglow.

That was three years ago. And tonight Simeon, plodding home through the foggy gloom, was swearing a little under his breath.

"It's the weak spot in the boy," he said testily; "I believe he's soft at the core."

He inserted his latchkey, grumbling still. "Washes dishes, does he? Damn him! Umph! Damn him!" And yet it was as if he had said: "Bless him!" The great door swung noiselessly open, and he went in.

II

THE woman was looking into the dusk. Her hair, short like a boy's, curled a little about the ears. She pushed it back as she looked, her eyes deepening and widening. It was a gentle face, with a sharp line between the eyes, that broke its quiet. She sank back with a little sigh. Foolish to look. . . . He could not come. She must think of something. . . . The twilights were long and heavy. . . . What was it he had written? . . . Hollyhocks? yes; that was it—in the garden. He had said she should have them—next Summer. She leaned back with closed eyes and folded hands, watching them—pink and rose and crimson, white with flushing red, standing stiff and straight against the wall. They were so cool and sturdy, and they brought the sunshine. . . . The dark floated wide and lost itself in a sky of light. The smile crept back to her lips. She stirred a little. The door opened and closed. . . . His hands scarcely touched her as he bent and kissed her.

"It's you—!" a little cry of doubt and delight.

"It's me, mother." The words laughed to her quietly.

She put out a hand. "How long can you stay?" She was stroking his coat.

"Always."

"What—?" The hand pushed him from her. The eyes scanned his face.

"Always," he repeated cheerfully—"if you want me."

She shook her head. "I don't want you. I wrote you I was—happy."

"Yes. You wrote me too often—and too hard." He was smiling at her. But the lamps were misty. "Did you think I wouldn't see?"

"Oh, dear—oh, dear—dear, dear!" It was a little wail of reproach at his foolishness—and hers. "And you were doing so well!"

"I can do better here. What's burning?" He sniffed a little.

She glanced anxiously toward the kitchen. "Your father put some crust in the oven to brown. It can't be—"

"It can't be anything else," said John.

When he came back he told her of the great Dr. Blake.

They sat in silence while the room grew dark about them.

Now and then she reached out and touched his coat softly.

"Tomorrow then—?" half-doubtfully, when he bade her good night.

"Tomorrow we shall see the great doctor," he assented cheerfully. "Good night, mother."

"Good night, my son."

The great doctor looked her over keenly, with eyes that saw everything and saw nothing.

"A little trouble in walking?"

"Yes."

"And nervous sometimes—a little?"

He might have been a neighbor inquiring after her health. The little woman forgot herself and her fear of him. She told him very simply, of the long nights—when the walls seemed closing in and there was no air except under the sky, and her feet refused to

carry her. The line between her eyes grew deeper as she talked, but the hands in her lap were very quiet. She did not shrink while the doctor's sensitive fingers traveled up and down her spine with almost roseleaf touch. Only once she gave a quick cry of pain.

"I see. I see. A little tender."

"Yes." It was almost a gasp, with a quick drawing in of the lip.

"I see." He nodded. "Yes. That will do—very nicely."

He led her away to another room—to rest a little before the journey. When he returned his glance met the boy's absently.

He arranged trifles on his desk—paper-weight and pens and blotter—as affairs of importance, before he spoke casually:

"She will always be ill—yes. It is a hopeless case—yes." He paused a little between the words, giving the boy time. "She will suffer—more than she has yet. But we can help a little." He had drawn a paper toward him and was writing his hieroglyphics with slow care, not looking up. "We will ease it, all we can. Keep her mind at rest. Make her happy." He turned his spectacles on the young man. "You can make her happy. That will do more for her than I can. . . . Will she live? Yes—yes. Longer than the rest, perhaps. . . . Shall you tell her? Not today, I think—some other time. She is a little tired. She is a brave woman."

III

SIMEON TETLOW glanced up sharply. The door had opened without a sound. "You've come. Umph!" He shoved the pile of letters from him. "Sit down."

The air was full of sunshine. Even in the dingy office it glistened and shone.

Across its radiance Simeon studied the dull face. "Well?"

The eyes of the boy met his, half-wistfully, it seemed. "She needs me, sir," he said.

Simeon stirred uneasily. "Seen Dr. Blake?"

"Yes, sir. He says he cannot help her."

"Umph!" Simeon shifted again in his chair. His eye dropped to the pile of papers beside him.

The boy's hands had reached out to them. Almost instinctively the fingers were threading their way among them, sorting and arranging in neat piles.

Simeon watched the fingers jealously. It was as if he might spring upon them and fasten them there forever. The young man's eyes traveled about the room, noting signs of disorder. "I can stay today," he said slowly. He hesitated. "I can stay a week, sir, if you want me."

"I don't want you a week." The man was looking at him savagely. "You must bring them here," he said.

"Here?" in doubt.

The man nodded. "They can live here as well as anywhere?"

The boy pondered it a minute. He shook his head slowly.

"They wouldn't be happy," he said. "She has friends there, in Bridgewater—people she's known ever since she was a little girl—and father has his work. He's an old man. It wouldn't be easy for him to get work here. He has an easy job—"

"Work enough here," growled Simeon. He was studying the boy's face keenly. Was it possible the fellow was making capital of all this? He threw off the thought. "Work enough here," he repeated.

John considered it again. He looked up. The lamps threw their clear light into the future. "I'd thought of that, sir," he said slowly, "and I've talked about it—a little. But I saw it hurt them. So I dropped it."

"You're missing the chance of a lifetime," said Simeon. "There are men working below that'd give ten years off their life to get what you've got without trying."

The boy's quiet eye met his.

"Oh, you've tried—you've tried. I don't mean that," he said testily. "But it's a case of fitness—the chance of a lifetime," he repeated significantly.

The boy looked at him. "I know it, sir. I've thought about it a long time. It's hard to do. But, you see, we never have but one father and mother."

The other met it, blinking. "Umph!"

"I shall try to get something at the Bridgewater office. I thought perhaps you would recommend me if there was a vacancy."

"There isn't any," said Simeon shortly—almost with relief.

"The second shipping-clerk left week before last."

"You don't want that."

"I think I do."

Simeon turned vaguely toward the pigeonholes. The boy's quick eye was before him. "This is the one, sir."

Simeon smiled grimly. He drew out a blank from its place and filled it in. "You won't like it," he said, holding the pen in his teeth while he reached for the blotter. "It's heavy lifting, and Simpson's no angel to work under. No chance to rise, either." He was glaring at the boy, a kind of desperate affection growing in his eyes.

The boy returned the look mistily. "You make it a little hard, sir. I wish I could stay." He half held out his hand and drew it back.

Simeon ignored it. He had taken down a ledger and picked a letter from the pile before him. The interview was over. The president of the R. & Q. Railroad was not hanging on anybody's neck.

"It's the other ledger, sir," said John quickly, "the farther one." He reached over and laid it deftly before his employer.

Simeon pushed it from him savagely.

"Go to the devil!" he said.

The boy went, shutting the door quietly behind him.

IV

It was six o'clock—the close of a perfect June day. Not even the freight engines, pulling and hauling up and down the yard, with their puffs of black smoke, could darken the sky. Over in the meadow, beyond the network of

tracks, the bobolinks had been tumbling and bubbling all day. It was time to close shop now, and they had subsided into the long grass. In the office the assistant shipping-clerk was finishing the last bill of lading. He put it to one side and looked at his watch. A look of relief crossed his face as he replaced it and climbed down from the high stool. It had been a hard day in the Bridgewater freight-office. News had come, in the early morning, of a wreck, three miles down the track—a sleeper and a freight had collided where the road curves by the stonework of the long bridge, and John had been sent down to help in looking after the freight.

It was one of the worst wrecks the road had known. No one placed the blame. Those on the ground were too busy to have theories; and those at a distance had to change their theories a dozen times during the day. At noon word came that the president of the road was on his way to the scene of the accident. The news reached John as he was getting into the wrecking-car to return to the office. He paused for a flying minute, one foot on the step of the car. Then he swung off, and the car moved on without him. He spent the next half-hour going over the ground. He made careful notes of every detail, recalling points from memory, taking measurements, jotting down facts and figures with his swift, short fingers. When he had finished he took the next wrecking-car back, making up for lost time by lunching at his desk while he worked.

All the afternoon he had been doing the work of three men. . . . Six o'clock. He got down from the high stool, stretching himself and rubbing his arms. In ten minutes the special would pass. He glanced out through the office window at the back of the building. High at the top of the sandy bank a bunch of clover bloomed against the sky, huge heads, with pink and white hearts—a kind of alfalfa—perhaps a seed from some passing freight. He had seen them, flaunting there, between hurried snatches of work, all the afternoon. He

would pick them and carry them to her. But not now. . . . He looked again at his watch. He wanted to see the special when it passed. It would not stop, probably, but he might catch a glimpse of Simeon Tetlow. He had often wished he might see him, and he had often thought of his face the morning he said good-bye. Beneath the anger in it had been something the boy could not fathom—a kind of entreaty. . . . He must find some way to give him the notes he had made of the wreck. He stepped out on the platform, looking up and down the shine on the tracks. The sun, coming low across the meadow beyond the tracks, made everything beautiful. A whistle sounded. The special—at the upper bridge. In five minutes it would pass. A smile curved his lips. The sound of quick bells and puffs and wheels came pleasantly to him from the engines at work in the yard down beyond the freight-house. A long train at the left was backing in slowly. John watched it and jingled some pennies in his pockets. He was thinking of Simeon Tetlow, the smile still on his lips. . . . Suddenly the smile stopped. The fingers gripped the pennies and held them fast. . . . His eye flashed along the top of the slow-moving train. No one in sight—level tracks—the special two minutes off—the freight taking her track. . . . The switch if he could make it. It was not a thought, but a swift turn of the short legs. Never had they seemed to him so fat and heavy beneath him. Yet they were flying over the ties as the wind sweeps a field. The short, strong body dropped itself upon the switch and hung there, gripping—a whirl of cinders and blast and roar. . . . Had he come fast enough? . . . Ages passed. He lifted his head and looked back up the long tracks. The freight was still backing in slowly. The special—like an old lady who has taken the wrong crossing—was emitting a sound of dismay, a quick, high note. The wheels reversed and she came back, puffing and complaining, in little jerks.

When the train halted Simeon Tetlow stepped down from the platform. His

hand, as it left the iron rail, trembled a little. He thrust it into the pocket of his light coat, looking up and down the tracks with stern glance. The glance fell upon John mopping his brow.

The president of the road moved toward him slowly. "What's up?" It was short and sharp.

John waited a minute while he mopped his brow again and replaced the handkerchief. He was thinking fast—for two. "I—I wanted to see you, sir." One glance at the man had told him everything—the shaking hand clinched in the pocket, the quivering nerves, the dusty journey, the anxiety and fierce need of help. One more shock and the tension would give way. "I wanted to see you, sir," he repeated quietly.

Simeon was looking at him keenly, up and down. "So you stopped my special?"

John nodded. "Yes, I stopped it—I guess I stopped it." His voice almost laughed at the words. He was tugging at something in his pocket. "I wanted to give you these, sir." He had fished out the handful of papers—old envelopes, scraps, bits of newspaper margins—covered with writing and figures. "I was down there this morning—to the wreck," he said quickly. "Things were pretty well mixed up—I thought you might like to see how they lay. I made some notes."

"Ah-h!" It was a long-drawn breath—something between a snarl and a laugh. "Come inside."

They went into the special, with her hideous decorations of plush and imitation leather. The president nodded to the seat beside a table covered with telegrams and newspapers and memoranda. "Sit down."

He seated himself opposite the boy, his elbow on the table and his head resting on the hand. Beneath its shelter his swift eyes looked out, scanning the boy's face.

"Well?" It was sharp and quick.

The boy smiled at the familiar note. He ran over the papers in his fingers, selecting one near the bottom. "This is the way things lay when we got there.

We were the first on the ground. I had a good chance to see," he said simply.

"I'll warrant," Simeon growled a little, leaning toward it.

The boy moved nearer to him. "These are the sleepers—the freight lay this way, over to the left. They must have struck just as the last car left the bridge."

"I see." Simeon reached out a hand for the paper. It trembled mistily as he bent above it. "I see." The tone held a note of satisfaction.

"What else?" He looked up quickly.

John was sorting the papers, a half-smile on his slow lips. A sense of happiness held his stubby fingers.

The president's eyes rested on the dull face for a long minute. His hand, holding the paper, had ceased to tremble. He was resting in the strength of this body, short and sturdy and full of willing life. No one knew what that stubby-fingered boy had meant to him—what plans for the future had been cut off. The boy was to have been closer than a partner for him, closer than his own body, through the years. He was to have lived with him—shared his fortune good and bad. . . . No one had guessed. He himself had not quite known—until, one day, the door closed behind the boy and he found himself sitting before a desk, trying with trembling fingers to . . . He had worried along since then as best he could. . . . And now he was sitting in the quiet car with the boy opposite him. The freight outside was pulling away with slow, disturbed puffs. The low sun shone through the car, and a glow of red plush lifted itself about them and filled the car with clear, rosy light.

The boy looked up. His eyes met the watching ones, and a quick light flashed into them, touching the lamps of service to flame. "This is the next one, sir." He looked down again at the papers and held one out.

The president pushed it aside with a touch. His eyes searched the boy's face. "Tell me what happened—just now."

"Just now—?" The boy looked up, waiting, his lips half apart.

The president nodded. "You know—when we stopped—what was wrong?"

The boy waited a minute. "No. 39 had your track," he said at last quietly. "She's gone now. That's her whistle—up the yard." He turned his head a little.

The president's eyes still scanned the dull face. "And you changed the switch?"

"Yes, sir."

The president pushed the papers farther from him, making a place for both arms on the table. He leaned forward a little. "So that's what you left me for?"

The boy looked up, startled. "What, sir?"

The president nodded slowly. "To turn a switch, I suppose—" The thin hand lifted to his lips was trembling now as a leaf quivers at a sudden wind.

"Someone else would have seen," said the boy quickly.

"Nobody sees—but you." He crunched out the words. "When are you coming back?"

"Back?"

"To the office—I need you." He gulped a little over the words. He had never said as much to anyone.

The lamps, with their still glow, were turned toward him. "I want to come, sir."

"Well?"

"We talked it over last night. She wants me to do it— She will come with me— But——"

The president of the road was looking down now—waiting.

The boy's eyes studied the worn face with its wrinkles, the thin, hard lips and stern lines. Something in it made his heart suddenly go from him. "I think I'm coming, sir," he said simply.

The face did not look up. It worked strangely for a moment.

Then it dropped in the folded arms on the table and rested there.

The boy fell to sorting the telegrams.

When the man looked up the face was quiet. But something had gone from it—a kind of hard selfishness.

The gentleness that touched the lines had left them free. He smiled a little wistfully as he held out his hand for the papers. "I'm ready now. Go ahead."

In ten minutes the papers were all in his hands, and the special was on her way to the wreck. The boy watched it out of sight. Then he turned away and crossed the tracks to the sandy bank, whistling softly—little breaths of sound that broke into lightest bubbles of joy as he climbed the bank. He was going to gather the clover blossoms, with the pink-and-white hearts, to carry home to her.

V

THE man at work in the garden looked up with sudden interest. A light whistle had caught his ear. "That you, Johnny?" He looked out through the vista of currant-bushes and peas to the path that skirted the house. "You there?" he called.

The youth, who had come around the corner, nodded casually. "How is mother?"

The old man got slowly to his feet, rubbing his knees a little. "All right, I guess. She was out here with me a while ago, but I took her in. You got some flowers for her?" He glanced at the pink-and-white blossoms in the boy's hand.

"I got them on the bank by the track. Has she had a good day?"

"Putty good, I reckon. Putty good." He was coming down between the peas, limping a little. "They found out who's to blame——?"

The boy was moving toward the house, but he turned back with a little gesture of silence. "She doesn't know?"

The older man looked a little guilty. "Well—yes—fact is—I told her. She kind o' got it out o' me," he added in defense.

The boy smiled. "She always gets it out of you. Never mind if it hasn't hurt her." He turned again toward the house.

She was very quiet as he entered the room. The blinds were closed and the little light that came through the shutters made a kind of cool dusk. He crossed to the lounge and laid the flowers by her hand. The delicate fingers reached out and closed over them. "Clover blossoms," she said softly. "I was wishing today— We used to have them in the yard—before the lawn-mower—" The fingers strayed here and there, touching them gently. "Are they crimson?"

"Guess again." His voice was full of gentle love.

"Not crimson, no. . . . But they're not white, either——"

"But you're warm," he said.

The eyes flashed open and looked at him. "What happened today?"

"Father told you—about the accident?"

"The accident—yes. But there was something else——"

He laughed quietly. "You always know, don't you? Was it good or bad?"

She hesitated a second. "Good—for you."

"And for all of us, mother." He bent toward her. "We were talking about it last night—about my going back—if he wanted me."

"Yes. Have you heard from him?"

"I've seen him."

"Today?"

He nodded. "He came down to look after the accident, and his train stopped a minute at the office. He wants me—I think he needs me—but it's for you to say, mother—you and father."

The breath of a sigh came to her lips and changed to a smile. "Ah, if you can get your father to go——"

He smiled back, his eyes searching her face for the slightest shadow that should cross it. "He'll go," he said decisively. "And he'll like it—after we get there. But will *you* like it, mother? That's what I'm afraid of—you'll miss your friends—and little things——"

"I shall have you," she returned quickly, "and your father—and President Tetlow."

He smiled a little at the picture. But his face had suddenly cleared. "I believe you *would* like him," he said. "I never thought before how much alike you are—you two—in some ways!"

She laughed out. "He's a terrible hard man to get on with!"

He bent and kissed her cheek lightly. "For other people, perhaps—not for you—or me."

She had lifted the clovers and was looking at them. "How beautiful they are!" she said softly. They dropped again to her side. "I want to go." She was looking at him with clear eyes. "And I want *you* to go—I didn't see how it was when we talked it over last Winter—how much it would mean to you. I dreaded the change and your father is so hard to move—and I thought, too, that it would be too much for you—having me to look after and all the responsibility besides. I didn't see then—but I've been thinking about it months now, lying here. You really liked the work there and that made it easy." She was looking at him inquiringly.

He nodded slowly. "I liked it—I don't think I ever did any work I liked so well. It was almost as if I thought things out myself. I can't explain how it felt—but somehow I used to forget, almost, that I wasn't planning things—it seemed so natural to do them—the things he wanted done."

"I know." She sighed softly. "How he must miss you!"

He seemed not to have heard her. He was following his thought, clearing it to his slow mind. "You're right in the midst of things down there. It's like being fireman on one of these big engines, I guess—every shovelful you put in you can see her fly just as if you were doing it yourself. Here it's different, somehow. I do first one thing and then another, but nothing seems to count much."

"It's like being a brakeman," she suggested.

"That's it! I never thought of it! But I've always said I'd rather be

fireman on any old engine than a high-class brakeman—Pullman or anything."

Again the little breath of a sigh that changed quickly to a smile. "We won't be brakemen any more," she said. "We'll go live on the engine—right by the throttle—that's what you call it, isn't it?" A little laugh covered the words.

He bent and kissed her again. "Dear mother! You shall never go if you do not want it."

"Ah, but I want it—more than anything in the world. But there is your father——"

"There is father," he said decisively. "But first we'll have supper."

He went out into the kitchen and she lay in the half-dusk with the flowers clasped in her fingers. Presently she lifted them and drew them softly across her cheek. "It was good in you to make flowers," she said softly; "thank you for them. . . . Thank you. . . ." The words trailed away to a breath as she held the flowers to the light, turning them a little and shaking them softly apart to look into their cool fragrance.

Then she touched them again to her cheek and lay with closed eyes.

When the boy came in a few minutes later he stood for a moment watching her before he set the slender glass of water on the table and turned to the window, opening the blinds and letting in the late light. Her eyelids lifted and she looked out at him dreamily. "I must have been asleep," she said. "I was picking flowers in the meadow at home and the wind blew in my face. I ran a little way—" She held out the flowers to him. "Put them in water for me, John."

He took them and shook them apart, dropping them lightly into the glass of water on the table.

"They are drooping," she said regretfully.

"Yes, but they will come up—supper is ready." He had placed an arm under her shoulders and lifted her from her place as easily as if she were a child. They waited a moment while she slipped

to her feet, steadying herself a little. Then they moved slowly toward the door, her weight half resting on the arm that guided her. Anyone watching them would have seen where the boy had gained his gentle bearing. He leaned a little as they went, his soul absorbed in serving her; and something of the dignity and courage of the slender shoulders seemed to have passed into the heavier ones, as if they, too, bore the burden and the pain with heroic spirit.

To the old man, waiting by the stove, teapot in hand, there was nothing heroic in the sight of the two in the doorway. They were simply John and Marcia, and they had always walked together like that, almost from the time John could toddle across the floor. Then her hand had rested on the boy's shoulder and he had looked up, now and then, under the weight, saying, "Does it hurt this way, mother?" Now he did not need to ask. He guided the slight figure, half carrying it lightly, as if it had been a part of himself.

The old man set the teapot on the table and drew out her chair clumsily. "We've got lettuce for supper," he said proudly, "and reddishes, and tomorrow night they'll be a mess of peas, if nothin' happens."

She sank into the chair with a little sigh and a smile of pleasure at the dainty table. The lettuce lifted itself crisply and the radishes glowed pink and white in their dish. A silence fell for a moment on the little group. They had never formed the habit of saying grace. But when the mother was well enough to be in her place there was a quiet moment before they broke bread.

John looked at her now, a little shade of anxiety in his face. Then he began to talk of the day's happenings, the old man chiming in with the odd effect of a heavy freight, shacking back and forth through the whirl of traffic. To the boy and his mother talking was a kind of thinking aloud—elliptical flashes, sentences half-finished, nods intercepted and smiles running to quick

laughs. To the old man it was a slower process, broken by spaces of silence, chewing and meditating. Now and then he caught at some flying fragment of talk, holding it close—as to near-sighted eyes.

"You wa'n't thinkin' of moving to Bayport?" He asked the question humbly, but with a kind of mild obstinacy that checked the flow of talk.

"That's what we wanted to ask you, father." The boy had raised his voice a little, as if speaking to a person who was a little deaf.

The old man set down his teacup and rubbed his finger thoughtfully along his chin. "I don't b'lieve I'd better go," he said slowly. He shook his head. "I don't see how I can go no-how."

The boy glanced swiftly at his mother. A little line had fallen between her eyes. The slower processes of the man's mind were a nervous horror to her quick-moving one.

She leaned forward a little. "We want to go, Caleb, because it will be better for John," she said slowly.

He nodded imperturbably. "Yes, it will be better for the boy." He glanced at him kindly. "I know all about its being better for the boy. We talked about it last Winter, and if you'd made up your minds to go then, I wouldn't a' said a word—not a word."

"But it will be better now—easier to go. There isn't any other difference from what there was last Winter."

"Yes, there's a difference," said the old man slowly. "I didn't hev my squashes then."

"But you haven't got them now," said John. "They won't be ripe for months——"

"Six weeks," interrupted the old man solemnly. "They are just a-settin'."

"But we can buy squashes in Bayport, Caleb."

He looked at her mildly. "Yes, we can buy 'em, but will they be them squashes?—you know they won't be, and Johnny knows they won't." His look changed a little to severity.

"When a man's done what I have for

them squashes—why, I dug that ground and I fertilized it, and I've weeded and watered and fussed and tended them all Spring, and when a man's done that much a man wants to eat 'em!" It was a long speech for the old man, and he chewed in gloomy silence, his eyes fixed on the blue-and-white bowl that held the lettuce.

The boy was looking at him with a slow smile; it held affection and gentleness and firmness, as if at an obstinate child. The old man looked up for a fitting glance and returned to his bowl.

The boy's smile deepened. His affection for his father was full of quiet understanding. To the wife, the slow-moving, heavy mind was an anomaly—a clog upon a free spirit. But for the boy, the slow movements were touched with kinship. The dumb, peasant-like devotion to the ground, the slow speech and quiet obstinacy coursed in his own blood, warring at times with that other spirit that drove him to service—the spirit that kept aglow the lamps that were turned now to his father's face.

The man looked up again and saw them shining at him. "I want to go, Johnny," he said, and his thick lips trembled a little; "I want to do what's best for you. You know it and your mother knows it." He was looking at her humbly.

"Yes, Caleb, I know." The line had vanished from her eyes. Dear old Caleb! How slow he was and how right, always, in the end!

"How would it do, father, if we had the things sent down to us?" said the boy.

The man's mouth was open, regarding him mildly. "If we had *what* sent, Johnny?"

"The garden stuff—peas and beets and squashes and so on?"

The dull look lightened. "Maybe we could—and it would seem good to eat the same ones we raised, wouldn't it?" He looked at him appealingly.

"We'd all like it, and it would be good for mother—to have the things fresh from home."

"So 'twould, Johnny. So 'twould.

Who'll we get to tend 'em?" The thought puckered his forehead in anxious lines.

"There's Stillwell," said John absently. He was not looking at the old man, but at his mother's face.

It was turned to him with a little smile. "I am glad," she said, as if he had spoken.

"You are tired?"

"Yes. It has been a long day—so much has happened."

"I will help you to bed," he said thoughtfully, "and then I must go back to the office for a little while."

She looked at him inquiringly. "Tonight?"

"Only for a little while. The special goes back at eight—I want to tell him."

She made a swift gesture. "Don't wait. Your father will help me."

"I'll help her, sonny. You run right along," said the old man kindly.

"I *am* a little late," said the boy, looking at his watch. "I'll have to hurry. But I'll be back before you're asleep." With a little nod he was gone.

They looked at each other across the vacant place. "I do' know how you're goin' to stand it," said the old man slowly.

"I shall not mind," she spoke with quick decision, "but it will be hard for you, leaving the garden and the place."

"We've lived here thirty year," he said thoughtfully.

"Thirty-one," she responded.

"So 'twas—thirty-one last May."

He came around and laid a clumsy hand on her shoulder. "You want I should help you, Marcia?"

"No, Caleb, I'll sit here a little—perhaps till the boy comes back. I like to look at the garden from here."

The old man's glance followed hers. "It is putty," he said. "You see how them squashes hev come on since mornin'?"

"Yes." She smiled at him in the dim light.

"Seems 's if you could 'most see 'em grow," said the old man, with a little sigh. He took up his battered hat.

"Well, I'll go see Stillwell. Like enough he'll be glad to do it."

But when he was outside the door he did not turn toward Stillwell's. He went down the garden path instead, stooping now and then to a plant or vine, patting the mold with slow fingers. At the end of the garden he dropped to his knees, feeling cautiously along the bed that skirted the high board fence.

... "Coming on fine," he said, "and hollyhocks is what she wanted most of all." His fingers strayed among them, picking off dead leaves, straightening stems and propping them with bits of stick. While he worked he talked to himself, a kind of mumbling chant, and sometimes he lifted himself a little and looked about the garden, much as a muskrat sits upon its haunches and watches the outer world for a moment before it dives again to its home. Once he looked up to the sky and his fingers ceased their work, his face wore a passive look. Kneeling there in the half-light, his big face lifted and the fragrance of the garden rising about him, he seemed to wait for something. Then his face dropped and his fingers groped again among the plants. By-and-bye he got to his feet, stamping a little to shake out the stiffness. "It's better for the boy," he said humbly. "I'll go see Stillwell right off."

VI

THE special was halting, with little puffs, and the president swung down from the steps. He looked about him with a nervous, running glance up and down the platform. If the boy were not here, he could not wait.

"Hello!" He laid his hands on a pair of broad shoulders that pushed toward him out of the dusk. "I want you—right off!"

"All right, sir, I'm coming." There was a note of joy in the voice that warmed the older man's heart.

"You're ready, are you?" He had turned toward the steps, with quick motion.

The boy laughed a little, hurrying beside him. "Not tonight. I must wait. There are things——"

The president paused, one foot on the step, glaring at him. "What things? Telegraph—" He waved a hand toward the office.

"It isn't that." The boy spoke quickly, the puffs from the engine driving his words aside. Nothing could seem important except that great engine panting to be off, and the nervous man gripping the rail at his side. "It isn't that, sir. It is my mother and the moving. I must see to that first."

"Oh, they're coming, are they?" The hand on the rail relaxed.

"Yes, sir."

The president stepped back to the platform. He made an impatient gesture to the engineer and turned to the boy. "How long do you want?" It was the old, sharp tone.

But the boy smiled, looking at him with shining eyes. "We might walk up and down," he suggested.

"Oh, walk—if you want to!" growled Simeon. He fell into a quick trot, matching the boy's stride.

"Things are bad down there!" He jerked out the words. "Damn fool work!"

"Yes, sir."

"And the fault's here." He nodded toward the maze of tracks that stretched away in the dark.

"Tomlinson is an old man," said the boy.

"Old fool!" retorted the other. "Must have been asleep—drunk!"

"I don't think he drinks," said the boy quietly. "The hours are long—he's old—he may have dropped off."

"He'll drop off now," said the other grimly—"way off. How long will it take—this moving business?"

The boy waited a minute. "I want to come now, sir, right off—tomorrow. But my mother is not well. You see we must wait for the right day, and there is the house to look out for and my father——"

"Don't you know I need you?" said Simeon gruffly.

The boy looked at him again. It was plain, even in the obscure light, that the man was driven. . . . He had never seen him like this; and he

thought rapidly. The engine had ceased its puffs, but he felt the great throbbing power waiting there behind it. His blood thrilled to it, drifting in his veins. To be off with this man—shaping the course of a world! They had come to the end of the platform and he stopped, wiping away the great drops that had gathered on his forehead.

"It's a hot night," said Simeon testily. "Come into the car—get something cool." The tone was almost crafty and the boy smiled, shaking his head. "Not tonight!"

Already the slow, patient underhold had regained its power. He spoke in his old, slow fashion, choosing his words with care. "I can't go tonight, sir. But I'll come the first thing in the morning, if that will do. A few days won't matter. The moving can wait till this thing is straightened out." He motioned toward the east, where the wreck lay.

They had turned and were pacing back toward the engine. Insensibly Simeon's gait had slowed to the boy's even tread, and his breathing had slackened its quick beat. He looked at the great eye blazing toward them through the dusk. "You won't come," he said, "not till you're good and ready. But I tell you—I shall dock your pay!"

The boy laughed out. "I will come tomorrow, sir, if she keeps well."

"Oh, tomorrow!" said Simeon. It might have been years from the tone.

He stepped upon the platform of the car. "I can get along without you," he said. The train had started and the words rumbled back, out of the roar of smoke. But to the boy, standing with his hat in his hand, they were an appeal for help, a call from the whirl and rush of the world for something that he had to give.

He turned away and went down the street, wondering a little at the strangeness of the day.

It was a radiant night.

He looked up to the sky—the same sky that the man in the garden had lifted his face to, a little while ago, kneeling among the plants—but the

stars were out now, lighting its gloom. . . . The boy thought suddenly of his mother's eyes and quickened his pace. She would be waiting for him, looking into the dark. He felt a little thrill of pride in her courage. . . . She would make the sacrifice for him without a murmur. Yet it was not for him—or for the man who needed him. But behind him—behind them all—a great hand seemed reaching out to the boy, beckoning him, drawing him to his place in the world.

VII

SPEEDING that night toward Bayport, through the dark and the stars, Simeon Tetlow's thoughts were often on the boy. He was haunted by the wreck. It was shattered glass, and charred wood, and blood everywhere, and trampled grass and leaves. . . . But across the face of the wreck moved the boy's eyes as they had turned to him, following his train into the night.

With the boy again, he could do all that he had ever planned—and more. In spite of his harsh words, flung back as the train started, his heart was aglow. John was coming back to him and together they could work out the plan that held him. . . . He could not have told the plan to anyone; it was hardly articulate, even to himself. He paced up and down the tawdry car, his hands, tense at his sides, opening and closing with the swift thought that crowded upon him. It had been coming to him through the months, while he had groped and wrestled alone. Slowly it had been forming deep below—shaping itself out of life—a vision of service. And today he had seen it stretching before him, unrolling its web of thought as the train tracked the fertile country. All day he had looked out upon wide fields, scarred and broken by late frosts, on orchards and meadows and stretches of plain, half-tilled; and always, in the distance, the mountains, filled to the brim with ore. It was a rich country, but starved, straitened—and no one knew better

than the president of the R. & Q. road the cause of its poverty. Across its length and breadth stretched the road—like a great monster that sprawled, sucking its life-blood. He had known it, always—and he had not cared. Let the country take care of itself. There was always enough for the road—and for dividends. He had put them off, when they had come to him begging better rates—leniency in bad seasons. There was not a farmer, up and down the region, that did not know Simeon Tetlow. He had a name among them. "The road was not there for its health." They knew his face as he said it, and they hated it. As he sped through the night, he seemed to feel it closing in upon him—a cloud of malevolence settling upon him from the hills, rising from the valleys, shutting in on every side—and he, alone in its midst, tracking the great country—his hand reaching out to grasp its wealth. But not now. He had seen it in the slow days that lay behind—a new vision. Sitting alone in his high office, he had watched the great system stretching out—not to drain the wealth of the country, not the huge monster that battered on its strength, but a vital necessity—a thing of veins and arteries, the highway of its life current—without which life itself must cease altogether or run feeble and clogged. The great imagination that could think a railroad into existence had brooded on the picture, sitting alone in its high office, watching the system stretching away, branching in every direction, lighting up the surrounding hills. And today, when the boy had said he would come back, the man had known that the picture would come true.

The porter had brought in his supper, placing it noiselessly before him on the table, but the president of the road had pushed it from him, leaning a little forward, gazing at the picture that glowed and filled the horizon. He drew his hand hastily across his eyes and the porter moved forward.

"Supper, sah?"

"Yes—yes." But he did not stir.

His eyes were fixed on the dark window, staring into the night.

The porter reached out a hand to draw down the blind, but the president stayed him with a smile.

"Let it be, Sam. I am ready, now."

He ate with quick, nervous motion, his eyes still on the window. Glimmers of light from the hills struck across it—towns glinted and sparkled and slipped into the night. The eyes followed them eagerly—each gleam of light, each flash of power. It was a new country—*his* country. It should be what he chose to make it—a fertile land.

The supper had been removed and the porter had set down the box of cigars on the table and withdrawn to his own place. The train rumbled through the night with swift shrieks and long, sliding rushes of sound. The president of the road reached out for a cigar. But the hand that held the lighted match trembled and whirled. He threw it aside, with an impatient sound, and struck another, taking the light with quick, tense puffs. It caught the spark and glowed. He dropped the match upon its tray. There was a look in his eyes that was half fear. He had been a man of iron—but the iron was shaken, shattered. . . . They threw the worn-out engine on the scrap-heap. . . . But not yet—give him a year, two years, to make the dream come true. He saw the country bud and blossom and fling its promise on the air. In the ground he heard the grass grow, creeping. The grain beneath the mold could not move its silken filaments so lightly that his ear did not catch the sound, and from the mountains the ore called, loud and free, knocking against its walls. The mountains opened their great sides, and it poured down into the valleys—wealth for all the world. It should come true. . . . Time and strength—and John!

The cigar had gone out and he tossed it aside, throwing himself on the red cushions and staring at the ceiling that swayed to the swift run of the engine. Then he closed his eyes and the boy's

face was before him, smiling. He slept fitfully. The train rumbled and jarred through his sleep, but always with its song of courage—iron courage to face the day.

VIII

THERE were no dreams in the eyes of the president of the R. & Q. road the next morning. The office was a chaos of papers; they lay on the desk and on chairs and covered the floor. When John opened the door and stepped in the president was running distracted fingers through his hair and diving into the chaos. He came up with a grunt.

"I wish you'd find that statement the C. B. & L. sent last month—and be quick about it!"

With a smile the boy hung up his hat and went down on his knees into the chaos, filing, selecting, discarding, with the old care.

Simeon returned to his desk, glowing. He took up the telephone receiver and put it to his ear, his scowl alert for blunders. . . . "What!—no!—you've copied that wrong! The last one—yes. . . . Tomlinson, I said—not Thompson. Oh, Lord! Tomlin—*l-i-n* . . ."

John slipped quietly from the room. At the door marked with the bronze token, "President's Office," he paused. The typewriters clattered merrily within, and through the ground glass he caught a haze of pompadours rising against the light. He opened the door and looked in. The young women at the typewriters did not look up—except with their shoulders. The one by the large window scowled fixedly at her machine, her fingers fidgeting and thumping the keys. Her mouth wore a look of fine scorn and her blue eyes glinted.

John returned to the outer office. The head bookkeeper looked up with a nod. "Morning, John. Moving along up above?"

The boy nodded a slow reply. "Where is Edith?" he said.

"Oh — Edith?" The man thought a moment with pen suspended. The light from the hanging bulb fell on his lined face. "Edith? Oh, yes. Congdon took her. Billing-room, I guess. Back to stay?"

"Not for long." The boy had disappeared through the swinging-door at the end of the room.

The young man seated at another desk in the room followed him with a curious glance. "Who is that?" he asked, turning a little on his stool and staring at his companion.

The head bookkeeper nodded absently. "That is John Bennett." His finger was on the column, tracing a blunder to its source.

"And who in hell is John Bennett?" demanded the other slowly.

"You'll find out—if you stay long enough," replied the head bookkeeper pleasantly. He placed his finger on the column and jotted figures on the little pad at his side. He laid aside the pad. "He's Simeon Tetlow's shadow," he said. "The two Bridgewater boys over there by the window." He nodded his head. "They call him 'Sissie Johnny.'"

"Looks like a fool and acts like Lord of Creation," muttered the other.

"That's what he is," said the head bookkeeper. He had no time for conversation just then. He was close on the track of his mistake. Moreover, the assistant bookkeeper was a thorn in his side. The appointment had been none of his—one of old man Tetlow's blunders, he called it savagely, when he had time to talk. The assistant bookkeeper took up his pen, looking at it musingly. He knew, perhaps better than the head bookkeeper, to what he owed his appointment. Six months ago he had been in the employ of the rival road. Just why he had left them was his own affair, as were also the wires that had been pulled in his behalf along the R. & Q. Well, he was here. He had gathered much interesting information in his six months—information that might be valuable—very valuable—some day. He dipped his pen in the ink. . . . As for this John Bennett

. . . The pens were both at work now, flying fast.

"You want Edith?" Congdon, the head billing-clerk, looked up from his file of bills with a little scowl; it changed slowly to pleasure. "Why, how are you, John? Didn't know you were back. . . . Edith—well, yes, I took her—wanted another hand here. Marshall said they could spare one from the office. So I took the littlest." He smiled genially.

"Littlest and best," said John.

The other laughed out. "I began to suspect it. The old man wants her back?"

"Right off."

Congdon turned a little in his place. "Oh, Edith!" He raised his voice and the girl across the room looked up.

He beckoned to her and she came slowly, leaving her machine with a little touch that was almost a pat, as if it said, "Coming back very soon."

"Yes, sir." She stood before them, waiting, a slight, dark girl, with clear glance.

"Ah!" The man's eyes dwelt on her kindly. "They want you back in the office, Edith. You needn't stop to finish—I'll put someone else on those."

She turned away with a look that was almost a smile of pleasure. Half-way to her table she paused and came back. "I can take my machine, can't I?"

He laughed tolerantly. "Oh, take it along, if you want to. Nobody else wants it."

John followed her to the table. "I'll carry it for you, Edith."

She slipped out the paper she had been at work on and began gathering up the trifles from her table.

When he set down the machine in the president's office a ripple of eyebrows passed it by—glances too busy for comment. The clatter of the typewriters rose and hummed. The hive could not pause for a worker more or less. She slipped into her place with a little smile and nod, waiting while John shifted the telephone connection and swung a bulb, with its green shade, conveniently in place.

The little bell rang sharply and she leaned to the receiver. "Hello!"

John crossed to the young woman by the window. She had finished a sheet and was drawing it out with a quick swirl.

"All done?" he asked pleasantly.

She ignored him, rubbing out an offending word and blowing away the black fuzz before she looked up. "What is it?" she said sharply. Her hair, which was red and crisp, glinted as she turned her head.

John's eyes followed it with a little look of pleasure. There was something about that color that always made him happy. He did not know this and it had never occurred to him to be diplomatic. But a hint of a smile crossed the girl's mouth.

"Well?" She was looking at him tolerantly.

He drew a sheaf of papers from his pocket. "These are to be copied—leaving blanks here, and here—send a boy when they are done. He wants two carbons—very clear."

"All right." She took them from him with a look of relief. It might be an honor to take down the old man's dictation, but it was an honor she could dispense with. She fluffed her fingers toward the glinting hair and descended on the keys.

John stood for a moment looking thoughtfully at the crisping hair in the wide window-light. The girl had turned her head a little and it twinkled, but did not look up.

As he crossed the room, he glanced casually at the new occupant. Her head was bent to the receiver and a little smile played about her lips. "Yes—yes—yes?—yes." Her fingers moved quickly and she nodded once or twice as if listening to something pleasant. "She *likes* to work for him," thought John, "same as I do."

With a look of satisfaction on his round face he closed the office door behind him. He had accomplished, without a jar, what perhaps no other man in the service could have done. But he was not thinking of this—he hardly knew it. He was planning

what Simeon should have for luncheon—something hot and staying. . . . He reached out a hand to a boy, who was hurrying toward the elevator. "Hold up, Sandy. What's that?"

"A note for the president." It was the tone of pride.

John smiled a little as he held out his hand. "I'll take it to him—and here"—the boy's face had fallen—"take this." He wrote hastily on a pad. "Carry that, one o'clock sharp, to the Holman House. They'll give you a luncheon for the president. Sprint, won't you?"

"You bet!" The smile was stealing back to the boyish face.

John nodded. "Bring it up yourself—set it on the box by the door—not later than one, mind."

The boy nodded and was gone, tucking the note in his pocket. It did not occur to him to question the authority of this slow-moving young man—hardly more than a boy himself. It did not occur to anyone to question it, as he made his way in a sort of slow-looking, fast fashion about the building, doing the things, little and big, that came to his hand. One did not think of the boy apart from his eyes. It was as if a spirit dwelt there, guiding the slowness and sureness, and men yielded to it as they always yield to the light when it shines on them.

If the boy had known his power or guessed it, it would have vanished, slipped from him, even while he put out his hand to it. But he had always been slow and stupid—not clever like other boys—and needing time and patience for his work. He knew that it rested his mother to have him do things for her, and that Simeon Tetlow needed him. Beyond that his mind did not travel. He could not have told how he knew men's thoughts—read their minds, almost, when their eyes looked into his—any more than he could have told why certain colors made him happy, or why he had chosen Edith Gurton out of the office force for Simeon's private work. Things came to him slowly. He stood motionless,

sometimes, waiting—almost stupidly, it seemed—before a piece of work, a decision to be made. . . . But when he put out his hand to it he held it with firm grasp.

Simeon did not look up when he came back. He was speaking into the telephone, a look of comparative peace on his face.

John swept aside the heap of bills and memoranda that covered the desk across the room. Then he looked about for the dust-cloth. He found it in the pocket of one of Simeon's old coats on the wall. A piece of cheese fell to the floor as he shook it out. And Simeon, looking around as he hung up the receiver, smiled for the first time in weeks.

"So that's where I put that cheese, is it? I got it one day for luncheon—forgot where I put it—didn't have any luncheon that day at all." He was looking at it regretfully.

John tossed it into the waste basket, a look of disapproval on his face. He wiped the dust from his desk, arranging the files of papers he had collected from the floor and placing them in pigeon-holes.

Simeon watched, a look of something like contentment creeping to his face. "You found that statement yet?" he asked. The question was almost mild.

"Yes, sir." John picked up the paper and handed it to him. "They've made double charge on those forty boilers, haven't they?"

Simeon took it and glared at it. "That's what I can't find out," he said. "I can't find out." He sighed impatiently and laid it on the desk while he reached for another set of papers.

John, watching the face, was struck anew by the weariness in it. It was the face of an old man.

He held out his hand. "Suppose I take it, sir. I'll be down in the yard this afternoon and I'll look it up."

There was a sound of jingling glass outside the partition.

John stepped quickly to the door.

"Here, Sandy. Take this to Mc-Elwain in the yard. Tell him I'll be

down in half an hour. Here's your luncheon, sir." He brought in the tray and placed it on the table, setting a chair before it and drawing the cork from the bottle. He removed the napkin that covered the tray. "Your luncheon's ready, sir."

With a sigh of satisfaction, the president of the R. & Q. road rose from his desk.

"There's a fresh towel, sir, and I brought up some soap."

With another sigh, the president of the road obeyed.

IX

SIMEON was looking over his mail, grumbling and fussing. He pushed the pile of letters toward John when he returned from luncheon. "They're coming in—thick and fast," he said.

"What are they?"

"Damages." He was scowling absently at the sheet in his hand. "Mail was full of it this morning. Here's another." He tossed it to the boy.

John gathered them up, looking at them thoughtfully.

"Take 'em to McKinnon," said Simeon. "He'll 'tend to 'em for us."

"Shall I read them first?"

Simeon snorted a little. "Read 'em? Yes, read 'em if you want to. You won't find them very entertaining. I didn't."

The boy was turning them over slowly.

"I'll pay 'em—every just claim," said the old man. His shoulders were hunched a little forward, as if he were talking to himself. "I'll pay the just ones—every last cent. But the fakes can look out—that's all!" His jaw set itself firmly.

The boy had taken them to his desk and was going through them, making notes from them slowly. The heavy look in his face held a kind of pain. He was seeing it again—the wreck—the flare of fire; there were groans about him and shrill calls—hysterical women—and there had been a child . . . He glanced across at Simeon.

The old man's face, bent to his work, was gray and haggard. He looked up, meeting the boy's eye.

"It's a terrible thing!" he said, as if answering the look. "I can't get it out of my mind." His hand shook a little, reaching for the paper. "I'd give the year's profits—" he said slowly.

"Have to," said the boy quietly.

The shrewd business look flashed back to the man's face. "You can't tell," he said brusquely. "We shall settle 'em out of court—all we can."

"Won't it cost more?"

"A little, maybe. Some we'll pay a little more, perhaps, than the court would allow. But it's cheaper—in the end. The public won't get scared. It's bad having things gone over and raked up for folks to read. Let 'em sleep. We're ready and willing to pay costs. Keep the thing quiet. It's only the fakes that bother—" He gave a little sigh.

The boy was staring at the letter in his hand. He put it down and crossed to Simeon's desk, taking out the handful of notes he had made the night of the wreck. He ran them through his fingers and replaced them, smiling a little.

"What's that?" asked Simeon.

"I wanted to see if I made a note. I don't think I did, but I can remember." He went over and picked up the letter again. "It's this man Spaulding."

A light shot to Simeon's face.

"I think I saw him there."

"You did!" The light had gone out suddenly. "Fight it. You testify in court."

The boy was looking down at the letter thoughtfully. "It's a good thing I asked," he said.

"Asked what?"

"His name," said the boy. "I don't know why I did it. One of the brakemen told me. He limps a little, doesn't he?"

"He's the man," said Simeon promptly. "Rascal! Known him thirty years. He couldn't tell the straight truth if he tried—no more'n he can

walk straight." His mouth shut grimly. "He won't get a cent out of *this* road—not while *I* run it!"

"I don't think he will," said the boy quietly. "He was there—at the wreck. I saw him. But he came in a buggy."

"Buggy?" Simeon sat up.

The boy nodded. "And he went away in it. It was while I was looking after the freight—along toward the end. I had sealed the cars that weren't broken up and I was trying to tally odds and ends—things were scattered, you know?"

The old man's eyes assented gloomily.

"I was down in that gully to the left, looking after things, and I came on the horse and buggy tied there—a little way in from the road."

Simeon was smiling now, a look of exultation in his eyes. "You saw him?"

"He came down and got in while I was there——"

"See you?"

"It was a little off in the trees where I was; but I saw him quite plainly. It was getting light then—four o'clock, at least."

Simeon chuckled. He reached out a hand. "Let's have his claim—twenty thousand, is it!" He looked at it. "Ten cents would buy him—body and soul!" he said scornfully. "Just like him—to hear of it and drive across country—five miles—to get evidence!" He looked at John shrewdly. "Perjury's a good thing—put him where he belongs—where he'll stay put, too. He won't go driving across country, making up claims for damages, for quite a spell, likely, if he pushes this one." He tapped the paper in his hand. "Twenty thousand he wants, does he? Let him get it—work for it—making shoes!" He replaced the letter in his desk. "We'll keep that," he said. "We won't trouble McKinnon with it—not just yet."

He returned to his work, a look of satisfaction in his face, and went through the remaining letters, laying them one side, making a note for reference. "That's all!" He placed the last one on its pile and gathered up the bunch.

"There's one thing I've noticed," he said drily, "folks that get to handing in their claims inside of twenty-four hours ain't very badly damaged."

The boy looked up absently. "Did you mean this, sir?" He had picked up a letter from the pile and he brought it across, laying it on Simeon's desk. Across one corner of it a note was scrawled in Simeon's small, crabbed hand.

He looked at it with a snort. "Why shouldn't I?" he demanded.

John surveyed it thoughtfully. "I didn't know but you would like to read it again."

Simeon took it in his hand. "I've read it a number of times already," he said. "You see what it means, don't you?" He was looking over the top of his glasses at the boy's face.

The boy nodded. "They mean that you will promise to hold to the rates of the last two years."

"They don't say so——"

"It means that," said the boy.

Simeon nodded. "That's what I make out. Well—I don't do it—I don't promise the C. B. & L. anything. You understand?—not *anything!*" He was glaring at the boy.

"Yes, sir." He held out a hand.

"I only wanted to make sure."

Simeon handed him the letter. "The C. B. & L. is a big road," he said. "They've got smart men, but they can't run the R. & Q.—not yet." He pointed to the words scrawled in the corner. "You write what I've marked there. Don't let it go downstairs."

The boy went back to his desk.

Simeon wrote with level brows, scowling at the paper before him. By-and-bye he looked up. The boy, bending over his desk, had a troubled look. The president of the road watched him a few minutes in silence. He pushed back his papers. "Oh, John——"

The boy looked up. "Yes, sir."

"Don't you worry about that. It gives them a chance to cut. But they've been doing it all along on the side. I have pretty clear proof they carried Thornton & Birdwell last year for six—

five and three-quarters, part of the time, and a rebate besides."

"But this means open fight," said the boy. He was looking down at the note.

"And it's what I want," said Simeon quickly. "They've had their spies on me long enough. Let 'em come out and fight for what they get."

The boy was still looking at the paper, a question in his eyes. "You don't think they will connect with the Bridgewater terminus?" he said.

Simeon's eyes were on him shrewdly. "I think they'll try to."

"And if they—do——?"

"If they do, they'll find they can't—not this year, nor next."

The boy looked up quickly.

Simeon nodded. "You remember telling me last year that the Bardwell farm would block their road, and that you thought it could be got?"

"I knew they needed money," said John.

"They took a fair price," said the old man drily.

The boy's face lighted slowly. "They can't put through their road."

"Not without a lot of trouble. They can compel us to sell—maybe. But it will take time—and it will take a lot of money," he said grimly.

The boy's face answered the look in his. "You're going to fight 'em?"

The man nodded slowly. "I'm going to fight 'em." He touched the letter with his hand. "Do you know what that rate would mean for the road?"

"It has paid pretty well for two years," said the boy thoughtfully.

"And it would pay again," said the man. He looked at the boy. "It would pay three years—perhaps four—for the road. But it wouldn't pay the country."

The boy looked at him, a little puzzled light in his face.

Simeon surveyed him a minute. Then he turned away, as if half ashamed. "What did you find out from McElwain about those boilers?"

The boy glanced at the clock. "He's to have the statement at five. I'll get it now."

When he had gone from the room the man sat looking thoughtfully at his desk. He could not understand the feeling that had suddenly gripped him—a kind of shame—holding him back from revealing to the boy his purpose. He had faced the world with selfishness, but when virtue tried to look out from his eyes they had faltered and turned away.

X

JOHN went slowly down the stairs, pondering the quick words that had been spoken. What did it mean? He had never known the president of the R. & Q. to give a thought for anyone or anything—except the road. He must be going to pieces—talking about the good of the country. . . . The boy had always felt, in a vague way, the region hating Simeon—his hand against every man and every man's hand against him—and John had been his henchman, serving him faithfully; his quarrels had been John's quarrels and his battles John's battles. Again and again the boy's heavier hand had steadied him; they had fought to win and they had given no quarter. But now. . . . The boy's brow puckered in a little puzzled frown. . . . Now Simeon was turning his back on profit. . . . He was bringing on himself difficulties and annoyance. What was up? He shook his head and plunged into the yard.

When he came out he had forgotten his questioning. He held McElwain's statement. The C. B. & L. account was a clear overcharge—a mistake, perhaps; but it seemed to the boy there had been too many mistakes of that kind in his absence; and things were coming to the president of the road that should never have troubled him. No wonder he looked harassed and driven. But that should be changed now. He should have the quiet he needed for his work. The boy's heart glowed and he whistled lightly as he sprang up the stairs.

He laid the statement before the president.

The president grunted a little—puffs of smoldering wrath. He searched out the C. B. & L. statement, pinning them together with a quick stab.

The boy was gathering up the letters for the mail, licking each stamp and affixing it with slow precision in its corner, right side up. It would have troubled John's orderly soul had an ex-president gone out of the office, standing on his head. In the midst of the work he stopped, his eye held by an address on the envelope before him. He opened his mouth and glanced at Simeon, hesitating. He drew a stamp across the convenient tongue and placed it on the envelope, crowding it down with firm palm, his eye still on the address. He looked again at the president and laid the letter one side, going on with his stamps. When he had finished he bundled them together, the letter that he had laid aside on top.

Simeon was making ready to go, fussing a little at his desk.

"I'll take care of those," said John. He came across. "Did you want this to go?" He was holding out the letter.

Simeon dropped an eye to it curtly. "What's the matter with it? It's plain, isn't it—'Hugh Tomlinson, Bridgewater'?" He turned again fretfully to the desk.

The boy hesitated. "I thought it might be his dismissal," he said.

"It is."

"They're very poor, sir."

The man shot a look at him under keen brows. "That letter is not about their being poor," he said.

John laid it again on the desk. He brought Simeon's hat, brushing it a little and holding it out.

The man took it brusquely, crowding it upon his head, and moved toward the door. He passed the letter without a glance.

"Good night, sir," said John.

"Good night." It was a half-growl, muffled by the closing door.

The boy finished his work in the room. He glanced about; it was all right now, except the grime on the windows—and there must be some sort of

shade for them these hot days. . . . Awnings—? He went to the window and leaned out, looking for fastenings. . . . Yes, that would do. He would order them in the morning. His eye dropped to the street. It fell on the figure of the president on the opposite side walking slowly and bent like an old man. It almost seemed, to the boy watching, that the figure shook a little, as with a kind of palsy. The boy's eyes grew deep, following him out of sight.

Before he had turned away he became conscious that another figure had emerged from a doorway somewhere and was standing looking after the feeble, retreating one. Then it turned and reentered the building.

He closed the window, puzzling a little in his mind, half-wondering where he had seen the man before. . . . He gathered up the letters from the table, glancing at them absently. . . . Then it came to him—the new bookkeeper, Harrington. The president had told him—the one that had taken Carpenter's place.

He went out, locking the door behind him. The letter on the top he still held a little apart from the others, dropping it into the box by itself, holding it back to the last, as if hoping somehow to defeat its end. When it fell with a little swish upon the others he turned away hurriedly. He was thinking of Ellen's face—Tomlinson's wife—the morning of the wreck.

"He done it, Johnny," she had said piteously, wiping the wetness from her gray cheek. "And they'll turn him off, but it's hard on an old man—and there's not a cent laid by—not since the bairns came. We'd a bit before that, but it went for the boy's burying." The boy was Eddie, killed on the road the year before, a brakeman—Tomlinson's only boy. John had known him well. They had been schoolmates. "It's hard on the bairns," she had said. . . . They had come to live with Tomlinson—a boy and a girl.

He was walking slowly now, not thinking, hardly conscious of himself,

but feeling the misery in the old woman's voice. At the corner he paused a little, staring at the opposite wall. What had he forgotten to do? . . . The desks were locked and the door. . . . His fingers felt the key in his pocket. . . . And the copy was ready for Whitcomb in the morning. . . . And the windows? Yes, they were closed. . . . But he must go back. He would remember when he got there what it was. . . . With a little sigh, he had turned back. He walked more quickly now. . . . He would measure the windows for the awnings. Perhaps that was what he was trying to remember. He sprang up the stairs quickly and was on the upper floor almost before there was time for thought. His coming had been swift, and perhaps too silent for a man in the upper loft, who looked up with startled glance at the sound of a foot on the stair. He moved quickly from the place he had been standing in and met the boy half-way in the big room, his glance full of nonchalance.

John stared at him a little. Then his brow raised itself.

The man returned the look, smiling. "Jolly old place!" he said, moving his hand toward the loft, "lots of room."

The boy looked at him slowly. "No one comes up here," he said.

"Except the old man. I know," said the other pleasantly, "but I wanted some files for the morning—early. Thought I'd save time getting them now. Save bothering the old man, too."

"You didn't find them, did you?" He was looking into the man's eyes.

They flickered a little. "Well, I haven't had time." He laughed easily. "I only want a couple of dozen." He moved away a few steps.

"You won't find them here," said John.

"They're over here," said the man, looking back.

"I guess not."

The man moved quickly to a box and raised the cover.

The boy looked in with a startled glance. "Those belong on the third floor," he said sharply.

"Very likely," said the man. "I don't know about that. I'm new here." He had taken out a handful of the files and closed the box. "I don't run the business, you know. But I know where to find things when I want 'em." He spoke almost as if the last words had escaped without volition. It was a challenge to the clear eyes looking into his.

"They will be moved down tomorrow," said the boy. "They'll be more convenient down there," he added.

"That's all right," said the other smoothly. He had recovered his temper. "Glad to have seen you." He went softly down the stairs, with little tripping steps that tapped.

The boy's eyes followed him slowly. He went into the office and closed the door behind him. For a long minute he stood looking at Simeon's desk. Then he went across to it. He sat down before it and tried the lid. It was locked securely, as he had left it. He did not open it, but sat motionless, gazing before him. Dusk settled in the room—shadows crept in from the corners. But the boy had not stirred. . . . At last he raised himself, with a little sigh. He had come back none too soon. His slow, sensitive nature felt things that he could not have said. The president needed him—more than either of them had known! He opened the desk deliberately and took out a handful of papers, sorting out certain ones with mechanical fingers. Even in the dark he knew them; but he turned on the light for a minute to make sure; he selected certain ones and placed them together, slipping them into his pocket. Then he turned out the little looping bulbs and went out, and left the room to the darkness.

XI

THE next morning a new lock was on the office door and the key lay on the president's desk when he came in. He glanced at it sharply. "What's that?"

"I've had a new lock put on; the

old one was never very good," said the boy.

The man took up the key and slipped it on his key-ring without comment. A hundred times a day the boy did things without consulting him. If he saw any special significance in this new caution, his face gave no sign and his hand, as it slipped the ring into his pocket, trembled no more than usual. But his glance, as it fell on the boy through the day, held a quiet content.

Just how wrong things had been going for the last few weeks only the president of the road knew. It seemed almost as if there were a concerted plan to harrow him—some hidden power, that chose maliciously his weakest spot, at the moment when he was most off his guard. Yet he could never lay his finger on a thing or a person that proved it. He only felt helplessly enmeshed by circumstances—he, who had always driven others, chuckling at their discomfiture! But with the boy to help—Ah, what could he not do—with the boy! His face lost its driven look. The new awnings shaded the glare from the windows. It was almost comfortable in the little office.

As for the boy, he was watching over Simeon with new care. Not only did what he had seen the night before make him cautious, but Simeon's whole attitude troubled him. There was something about the man—broken, hesitant—that had never been there before. He had always been nervous, crabbed, but not like this. It was as if the spring had snapped—or weakened helplessly under the long strain. One could not tell, at any moment, whether it would respond to the demands made on it. Now and then he recovered himself, and spoke and acted like his old self. But again he would relapse into uncertainty, a kind of vague fretfulness and indecision, more trying than open collapse. It was when he spoke of the road and its future that he grew most like himself. . . . Quietly the boy took it in, his change of purpose, and his heart moved to it in gentle understanding. Little by little

Simeon revealed himself—a word here, a word there—never by full explanation—watching all the time the thought reflected in the boy's eyes and strengthening his courage in the clear look as it grew and deepened.

The boy threw himself into the work body and soul. It was good to be in the stir of things once more. He liked to feel the steady pound of the engine under him, as it drove to its work—to see the clear track and the shining country. . . . He drew his breath full and deep, and worked night and day, righting the things that had gone wrong, gathering details into his hands.

Simeon Tetlow could plan an edifice that in a night should overtop the world. But even while he planned he let slip a myriad details—things that fluttered and fell and went wrong and threatened the structure at its proudest moment. The boy gathered them up one by one, little things of no account, things too minute for Simeon's notice—and held them fast.

The office felt the change. The road felt it—vaguely. There was the same driving power in the little office, high up in the roof, but steadied and controlled—less smoke and wrath and ringing of bells in the orders that came down from the office, and a freer, heavier swing to the big engine as it took the track.

It was absorbing work and two weeks went by before the boy saw a chance to break away. There had been letters from his mother every day, full of detail—pictures of Caleb packing the dishes with clumsy fingers, or clearing out the cellar, happy and important, in spite of the parting from the squashes. John had smiled as he read the letters, but he had caught the note of courage beneath and sent it back to her full of cheer. . . . The moving would not be hard—with all that father had been doing. Three days would be enough for everything and he had their new home ready for them, a little house—seven rooms—with a garden stretching to the side and back for Caleb to dig in.

"I can raise a few things this year,"

Caleb had said when he heard it. "Lettuce and parsley and reddishes, maybe. And next year we'll have a *real* garden. I'm going to take up some roots of daffydils and some jonquils and a stalk of that flowering shrub by the walk."

He was occupied with this new hope when John arrived—pottering about with hoe and trowel—and they left him to his garden, while inside the house John tied up furniture and packed boxes, with watchful eye upon his mother that she should not overtax her strength before the journey. She had been a little restless the first day of his homecoming, going from room to room with long pauses for rest—a kind of slow pilgrimage—touching the familiar things softly, her thin hands lingering on them as if she might not see them again in the new home.

The boy watched her a little anxiously. But her face was still and her eyes smiling when they met his, and after the first day she sat with him while he packed, talking of their new home and his work, and when the carriage left the house she did not look back—her eyes were on the boy's face.

It had been arranged that they should travel in the baggage-car. Simeon had spoken gruffly of the special and John had refused it, and she herself had chosen the baggage-car. "It will interest me, I think," she said. There was a free space about her steamer-chair and through the partly open door that framed a great picture a fresh breeze blew in, stirring her hair and bringing a clear color to her cheeks. Her eyes were like stars, looking out on the fields, and she grew like a child with the miles. John's heart lightened as he watched her. What a thing of courage she was! Sheer courage—just a frail body to give it foothold on the earth. The boy could not have said it, but he felt it—through every dull fiber—the courage that he could never match, but that had been before every day of life. . . . He need not have feared the journey for her—she made holiday of it!

After a little he left her and went forward. He had seen a man sitting at the farther end of the car, bent forward, his elbows resting on his knees, his gaze on the floor of the car.

He did not look up as John paused beside him and the boy seated himself on the box.

After a time he looked up. "You're taking her to the Port?" He nodded toward the steamer-chair.

"We're all going down."

"I heerd it," said the man. He relapsed into silence. The train thundered on with hoarse stops and fierce quickening of power as it left the stations behind.

The old man lifted his head. "He's a hard man!" he said. He fixed his reddened eyes on the boy's face. "I've served the road—man and boy—forty year." He said the words slowly, as if they were important. They became a kind of chant in the roar of the train. "And now I'm turned off."

John waited a minute. His slow mind did not find words to speak to the haggard face.

"I'm going down to see him," said the man.

"The president!"

He nodded slowly and solemnly. "They say he's a hard man. But he shall hear it to his face—what I've got to say!"

"You're going to ask him for work?"

"I've asked it—three times. I'll ask it four times," said the man. "And after that I'll curse him."

The boy made a quick motion.

The old face lifted itself, with a tragic look, toward the car. "Is there aught a man can do?" he demanded. "They've shook the strength out of me for forty year on the road. . . . They'll not take it from me! . . . They've drove me up and down—cold and rain—wind that cut my in'ards—till I'm fit for naught but the switch. . . . They'll not take it from me!" It was a solemn cry.

The boy listened to it, for a moment, as it died away. The train roared its echo mockingly. He reached out a

hand and laid it on the rough knee. "Don't go down today, Tomlinson," he said slowly. "I want to see him first."

The old man stared at him with grim eyes. "Ye think ye can help me with him?" he asked sharply.

"I *know* I can. But you must wait. I have my mother to look after. I can't be at the office—yet. Wait till I'm there. You take the next train back and I'll write to you."

"I'll not go back," said the old man slowly. "I'll not face Ellen without news—good or bad. But I'll stop off with my daughter in Hudson. Ye can write me there and I'll come."

"I'll write you before the week's up," said John. "You may not need to come down."

"I thank ye, Johnny," said the old man. The train had halted at Hudson and he got stiffly to his feet.

"It's what Eddie al'ays said about you—you'd help a man out—gi'e you time!" He chuckled feebly with returning hope and climbed down from the car.

His mother's glance met him as he returned to her side.

He nodded. "He was going down to see the president. But I've got him to wait. . . . They ought to do something for him," he said.

"Is he strong enough to work?"

"He's not strong—except in an emergency, maybe—but he's faithful. That ought to count."

"Yes, that ought to count." She said the words softly under her breath.

XII

JOHN was not back at the office "within the week." He forgot the office and Simeon Tetlow and Tomlinson. He had eyes only for a white face looking up to him from the pillow and his ear listened only for low moans that broke the darkness. The spirit of courage had driven the thin body a step beyond the line where the soul has its way and the body had turned and struck back.

Tomlinson, waiting in his daughter's home, wondered a little at the silence, but waited, on the whole, content. Since his talk with John a hope had sprung up in him that somehow the boy would do for him what he could never do for himself. He had started out for Bayport more because he wanted to look Simeon Tetlow in the face than because he hoped for justice at his hands. But since he had talked with the boy his purpose had changed imperceptibly and his shrewd Scotch sense of justice asserted itself. He would speak the president of the road fair. The man should have his chance. He should not be condemned unheard. So Tomlinson waited, his sullen mood passing gently into tolerance.

But his daughter, a buxom woman, many years Eddie's senior, grew impatient at the delay. She prodded Tomlinson a little for his inaction.

"What is it like that Johnny Bennett—a slip of a boy—can do for ye with Simeon Tetlow?" she had demanded scornfully when the week had gone by and no word had come.

"He has a way ye can trust, Jennie—the boy has," the old man had replied.

"Best trust yourself," said the woman. "Go an' stand up before Sim Tetlow. Tell him to his face what ye want. And if he won't give it to ye—then *curse him!*"

So the old man wavered forth, half driven to a task to which he felt himself unequal. But his reliance was on the boy. He would find him and ask what to do.

"John Bennett?" The assistant bookkeeper, hurrying back from luncheon a little late, paused in the doorway, looking at the tall, red-eyed Scotchman who put the anxious question.

"John Bennett?" He wrinkled his brow a little, as if trying to place so unimportant a person. "I think he works up above—top floor. Take the elevator." He passed on, chuckling a little at the invasion of the sacred territory. "'Nobody comes up here,'" he said mincingly, as he drew the ledger toward him and plunged into work, hurrying to make up lost time.

Tomlinson looked a little fearfully at the iron cage, plying up and down. He cast an eye about for the more friendly stairway. He was not afraid of any engine, however mighty and plunging, that held to solid earth, keeping its track with open sky. But these prisoned forces and office slaves, clacking back and forth in their narrow walls, and elevators knocking at a man's stomach, were less to his mind. He climbed laboriously up the long stairs, flight after flight, his spent breath gasping at each turn. At the top floor he gazed around him, his mouth a little open.

"A queer place for the lad," he said to himself, his faith in John oozing a little as he walked across and knocked at the door of the little room.

There was a moment's silence; then the scraping legs of a chair, and silence.

Tomlinson had raised his hand ready to rap again. The door receded before his knuckles. . . .

It was the president of the road, himself, Simeon Tetlow—whom all men hated and feared—standing there, grim and terrible.

Tomlinson's nerveless hand rose to his hat.

"I'm wanting to ask you something, sir."

The man surveyed him with a scowl. "Who told you to come up here?" he demanded.

"It were Johnny Bennett, sir."

The scowling face changed subtly. It seemed to grow more human beneath its mask.

Tomlinson took heart. "It's only a word I want with you, sir."

"Come in."

Tomlinson shut the door circumspectly and stood turning his hat in his fingers.

"Well?"

"It's the place, sir—I'm Tomlinson," he said.

"Oh—you—are—Tomlinson——"

The old man shrank a little, as if each word had struck him lightly in the face. Then he raised his head. "I've served the road forty year," he said,

repeating his lesson, "and I've never done harm. I've worked early and I've worked late for ye, and never a word of complaint."

The president of the road stirred sharply. "The Bridgewater wreck——"

The old man raised his hand. "It's that I wanted to speak about, Mr. Tetlow." There was a simple dignity in the words. "I'd been on duty seventeen hour—and ten hour before that—with not a wink of sleep. They run us hard on the hours, sir."

"The other men stand it—the young men." The words had a kind of cutting emphasis.

The old man raised his red eyes. "They've not gi'ed their strength to the road, sir, as I have." He threw out a hand. "The road's had all o' me."

Simeon eyed him keenly, the bent look and worn shoulders. His glance traveled up and down the thin frame slowly. . . . Not an ounce of work left in him.

"We've no place for incompetents," he said, turning away.

Tomlinson made a step forward, as if he would touch him with his hands. Then he stood quiet. "There might be a boy's place, sir——"

The man wheeled sharply, driven without and within. "I tell you we've nothing for you. You've done your work. You've had your pay. You're used up." It was the biting truth and the old man shrank before it.

"I can't spend any more time on you," said the president of the road. He turned decisively to his desk.

For a moment Tomlinson stood with bent head. Then he raised his red-rimmed eyes, fixing them on the man before him. His right hand lifted itself significantly. "May the God in heaven curse ye, Simeon Tetlow, as ye have cursed me this day. May He shrivel ye, body and soul, in hell——" The words were shrill. "Curse ye—curse ye!"

He drew a step nearer, his eyes still on the other's face. . . . Gradually a change seemed to come over him. The bent figure straightened itself.

It towered above the president of the road, filling the little room. The chieftain of some mighty Highland clan might have stood thus, defying his enemy. His lifted right hand grew tense and flung itself and a torrent of broad Scotch poured forth. Words of fire, heard in Tomlinson's boyhood and forgotten long since, were on his tongue. The elemental passions were afire within him. Like the slow-burning peat in his native bogs, his soul, nourishing its spark through the years, had blazed forth—a scorching torrent. The words rolled on, a mighty flood, enveloping the man before him. Scathing tongues of flame darted at him and drew back, and leaped high—to fall in fiery, stinging showers on his head.

At the first words of the imprecation the president of the road had lifted his head with a little smile—almost of scorn—on his lips, as one might watch some domestic animal reverting to its ancestral rage. But as the broad Scotch rolled on—stern, implacable and sinister—the smile faded a little and the man seemed to shrivel where he stood, as if some fiery blast touched him. When he raised his head again the look in his eyes was of cold steel.

He waited a minute after the voice had ceased, then he lifted his hand quietly. "You've had your say, Tomlinson. Now I'll say mine. You leave this office and you leave the road. You'll never touch brake or throttle or switch on it again. You're not fit—do you understand?"

He moved his hand toward the door and Tomlinson went out, a tottering old man once more.

For a long minute the president of the road stood staring at the closed door. The hand that had pointed to it had not trembled; but now it began subtly, as if of its own will, to move. Slowly the vibration communicated itself to the whole frame, till the man threw himself into a chair, broken from head to foot. He leaned toward his desk, gasping a little. "My God!" he said under his breath, "my God!" He lifted his hand and wiped

the moisture from his forehead with the dazed look of one who has come through some mighty upheaval unharmed.

XIII

ANOTHER week went by before John was free to go back. The day before his return he received a letter, addressed in a huge, sprawling hand:

I seen him. I cursed him.
HUGH TOMLINSON.

Simeon made no reference to the visit or the curse, and John waited, wondering a little whether it might be possible, even now, to undo the consequences of the old man's folly.

That there was any connection between Simeon's growing weakness and the old Scotchman's visit did not occur to him. There were difficulties enough in the office to account for it without going outside. As the days went by and he watched the worn face, he grew more anxious. A look haunted the eyes—something almost crafty. They gazed at the simplest thing as if unseen terror lurked in it; and he started at any sudden noise as one pursued. . . . When John, leaning across the desk, pushed a book to the floor he leaped to his feet, his hand upraised to strike, his lip drawn back from his teeth in quick rage.

That night John made a midnight journey, traveling all night and coming back at dawn. He had been to consult Dr. Blake, the great specialist, laying the case before him—withholding only the name of the man whose health was in question.

The physician had listened, his head a little bent, his eyes looking out as if seeing the man whom John described. "It's the same story—I hear it every day," he said. "I call it Americanitis. It doesn't make much difference what you call it. . . . He must stop work—at once."

"He won't do it," said John as promptly.

The physician looked at him keenly.

"I suppose not—one of the symptoms. You have influence with him——?"

John shook his head slowly. "Not enough for that. I might get him to do other things, perhaps."

The physician nodded.

"He would take medicine?"

John smiled at the picture.

"Perhaps." He waited a little. "I'm afraid he's losing his mind," he said. "That's really what I want to know—I don't dare let him go on."

The physician assented. "If I could see him ten minutes, I could tell, perhaps—more. But not in the dark, like this. You ask too much," he said, with a smile.

John gave a quick sigh. "He will never come to you," he said.

The physician had drawn a paper toward him and was writing on it. "I can give certain general directions. If they don't help, he *must* come."

John waited while the pen scratched on.

"These baths," said the physician, "are good. They may help."

John's eyes grew dubious—a little wide with anxiety.

"These other things," went on the physician, "are for your discretion. He's probably under-nourished. Raw eggs will give him what he needs—tax him least."

"How many?" asked John.

"All you can get into him."

The young man's eyes grew larger—at the way before him.

"He doesn't half breathe, I suppose?"

"I—I don't know," said John.

"Watch him. Take him in hand. He must breathe deep—all the time, night and day. Here, I will show you." He put his hand on the young man. "Go on—I'll tell you when to stop." He held the hand in place a few minutes, then he withdrew it with a smile. "Tell him to breathe like that," he said quietly. "He'll get well then."

"Don't everybody breathe that way?" asked the youth helplessly.

The physician laughed out. "If they did, they wouldn't be nervous

wrecks!" He handed him the list of instructions. "He must be spared any nervous worry, of course. That is most important of all. Good-bye. If he gets unmanageable, send him to me."

"I wish I could," said John, with a little smile that was half a frown. He was not appalled at the details of nursing thrust upon him. He had cared for his mother too long and skilfully to be worried by these. But Simeon—yielding gracefully to being dieted—told what to eat and how to breathe and little things like that——!

During the home journey he devoted himself to planning ambushes for Simeon's obstinacy; and when, after a vigorous bath, he arrived at the office he was equipped with a dozen "strictly fresh" in a paper bag; a small egg-beater in one pocket and a flask of brandy in the other. This last was a little addition of John's own—prompted by wisdom and a knowledge of Simeon. He put the eggs carefully on a high shelf. It would not do to rouse untimely prejudice against them by untoward accidents. The egg-beater and brandy he concealed skilfully behind a row of ledgers. When Simeon entered a little later, irritable and suspicious, there was no sign that the office was to be turned into a kind of fresh-air hospital.

The windows were open and a little breeze came in. John, refreshed by his bath, was hard at work, the broad, phlegmatic back a kind of huge mountain of strength. The little man threw himself into his chair with a grunt. He would rest more looking at that back than he could in a bed all night, tossing and turning through the hours.

Schemes had haunted him—visions for the road—new tracks to be run—new regulations. Investments along the route, a little here and a little there, not for the corporation, but to build up the country—capital to help out feeble enterprises. And athwart the visions ran black shadows—disturbing dreams of the C. B. & L., always waiting, weapon in hand, to spring upon him. . . . If only they would

fight fair!—he had tossed restlessly, seeking a cool place for his tired head—there was no time to spend in fighting—so much to be done—his whole life-work to build anew. . . . Then he had fallen again to staring at the vision as it flared across the night, the vision of light and wonder. . . . When morning came he had slept perhaps an hour.

But here, in the cool office, he could rest. The boy came and went with quiet step, his hand everywhere, yet without hurry, and his thought running always ahead of Simeon's, smoothing the way.

The president of the road had intended to rest, but before he knew it he was hurrying feverishly to finish a letter for the ten o'clock mail. His head throbbed and his hand, as it dipped the pen in the ink, shook quick spatters across the paper. He swore under his breath, dabbing the blotter here and there. . . . There was a gentle shiver of eggshell, a little whirring sound that buzzed, and then, upon the air of the room, a subtle, pervasive odor. Simeon raised his head and sniffed. Then he looked around. The boy was at his elbow.

"You'd better take this, sir," he said casually. He set it down beside him, picked up a pile of papers and returned to his own desk.

Simeon dropped an eye to the glass of yellow foam. He looked hastily away. He particularly and fervently hated an egg—and an egg that foamed—bah! He wrote savagely, the gentle odor stealing up wooingly, appealingly to his nostrils. He moved restlessly in his chair, throwing back his head, as if to shake it off. Then his hand reached out slowly—shook a little—and closed upon it.

John, with his back to him, went on slowly sorting papers. When he looked around the glass, with its little flecks of foam, stood empty and Simeon was writing fiercely. The boy took the glass to the faucet and washed it, humming a little gentle tune to himself as the water ran. The first step in a long and difficult way had been taken.

But no one knew better than John that it was only a first step and that the road ahead was strewn with difficulties. . . . It was at the seventh egg that Simeon rebelled openly, and John was forced to retire upon six—thankful to have achieved as much as this, and thankful to have discovered the limit. "As many as you can get into him," the physician had said. John had not known what this number might be until the day of the explosion—when the seventh egg was proffered and rejected.

He had swept up the fragments of glass and repaired damages with grateful heart. . . . Six a day was the limit. But there ought to be a great deal of nourishment in six eggs.

That there was Simeon's conduct proved. He rose to a kind of new, fierce strength that exhausted itself each day.

"He's just eggs!" thought the youth, watching him gloomily. "He hasn't gained an inch. It all goes into work." And he set himself anew to spare the nervous, driven frame. There were times when he hoped, for a little, that a permanent gain had been made. But an emergency would arise and three days would be used up in one blaze of wrath.

The C. B. & L. was tireless in its attacks, goading him on, nagging him, now here, now there, till he shook his nervous fists, palpitating, in air.

"They've held back those machines on purpose," he said one morning late in September.

"Those machines" were a consignment of harvesters, sidetracked somewhere along the C B & L., and not to be located. The R. & Q. had been telegraphing frantically for weeks—only to receive cool and regretful apologies. Farmers were besieging the road. A whole crop depended on the issue.

Simeon tossed the last telegram to John with a grunt. "We'll have to give it up," he said grimly, "it's too late. But they shall pay for it—if there is a law in the land, they shall make it good—every cent. Think of that crop—wasted for deviltry!" He

groaned suddenly and the hand resting on the desk trembled heavily.

"You couldn't have helped it, sir," said John. "They would have done it anyway, and you've made them trouble enough."

"I don't know—I don't know." He turned his head restlessly, as if pursued. "I think any other man would have made 'em."

The young man laughed out. "They're afraid of you, sir—for their life. You've *made* the R. & Q."

The man gulped a little. He glanced suspiciously at the door. "I've ruined it, I think," he said slowly. "*There's a curse on everything I touch!*"

"Nonsense! Look at *me!*" He threw back his head, choosing the first words at hand to banish the look in Simeon's face. It was this look—the shadow haunting the eyes, that troubled the boy. Sometimes when he turned and caught it his own heart seemed suddenly to stop its beat at what it saw there. "Look at *me!*" he said, laughing. "You haven't ruined *me!*"

The man looked at him—a long, slow, hopeless look. Then he shook his head. "It's no use, John. I'm broken. The road has used all of me—" He stopped suddenly, his gaze fixed on the floor. . . . A memory rang in his ear. The high Scotch voice shrilled through it. "They've not gi'e their strength to the road, as I have. The road's had all o' me."

That night John visited Dr. Blake again.

XIV

THE assistant bookkeeper had returned from his two weeks' vacation—most of which had been spent in the vicinity of the main offices of the C. B. & L.—feeling a little sore. He had not been treated with the respect due to a person entrusted with important interests. Certain reports which represented hours of faithful work had been looked upon as of little worth, and others—facts most difficult, even dangerous, to obtain—had been demanded crassly. Moreover, his state-

ment that the president of the R. & Q. was practically a broken-down man had been openly flouted.

"You don't know him," the manager of the C. B. & L. had declared, sitting back in his big chair. "He's been a broken-down man for years. I'd like to be broken-down, myself, the way he is, a little while!" His chair creaked comfortably. "He's a steel trap! That's what he is!" he said sharply. "Look out for your fingers."

The assistant bookkeeper had smiled ruefully, rubbing the fingers together. "Of course, I've never seen him before," he said respectfully, "but if I know a man that's pretty near frazzled out—he's the man. There's nothing to him but a blaze."

"You don't know him," said the manager brusquely. He took a sealed envelope from the desk and held it out. . . . "When you report again we want the names of all parties shipping—with rates—and rebates," he added significantly. "This won't do, you know." He tapped the report that had cost the assistant bookkeeper many anxious hours lightly with his fingers.

The bookkeeper, whose hand almost of itself had reached out for the envelope, hesitated a little. "I don't know that I shall stay with the R. & Q.," he said softly.

"Don't you?" The manager's keen eyes read his little soul through—and smiled. "You haven't any particular position in mind where you can draw a better salary for keeping one set of books, have you?"

"I don't know that I have—just now." The tone was defiant—but wobbly.

"All right, stay where you are. You won't do better. Take my advice. You're getting along all right."

The assistant bookkeeper glanced again at the envelope and took it. "You better see Tetlow, yourself," he said as he went out.

The manager nodded. "You're all right," he repeated.

"Harrington will bear watching," he said to the division superintendent. "I don't trust him."

"Don't trust anybody," said the superintendent. "You won't get fooled."

"I wish I knew the truth about Sim Tetlow," went on the other. "It would be just like him to pretend he was a wreck, and then spring on us and paw us all over while we're getting ready to squeeze him. . . . You can't trust Harrington. He works for his pay." He touched the report a little scornfully. "But who knows that Tetlow isn't paying him—to say that he's a wreck—that makes three salaries—?"

"Go and see for yourself," said the other curtly.

The manager's face grew thoughtful. The shrewd light spread to his fat cheeks. "It's a good idea! I'll do it—right off."

XV

JOHN's second visit to Dr. Blake was much briefer than the first. The doctor had refused to advise further without direct consultation. "I must see the man," he said decisively.

And when John had demurred he had asked the patient's name.

"Simeon Tetlow!" he said thoughtfully, but smiling a little. "Why didn't you tell me it was Sim Tetlow at first?"

"Do you know him?" asked John.

"I knew him years ago, in college. He wasn't what he is now—more human blood. I knew him pretty well up to the time he was married."

John had started. "I didn't know he was married!"

"A beautiful woman," said the doctor—"too good for him—she died the next year—and the baby—that was twenty years ago and more. . . . So it's Sim! I might have guessed—there isn't a man in a thousand miles that fits the case as he does—driving himself to death!"

The young man was awaiting directions.

"Send him to me," said the doctor. "He'll come—yes. He won't mind seeing me!" He laughed a little.

John had started for home with

lighter heart. Simeon would obey the great doctor—and all would be well. He even slept a little on the way. But when the train reached Bayport it was not yet three o'clock. He hesitated as he left the station. He had not expected to reach home before morning and his mother was not expecting him. She would be sure to waken—perhaps lie awake the rest of the night. He turned his steps toward the R. & Q. office building. There was a cushioned settle in the little upper office; he had had it brought in lately—in the hope that Simeon would use it. He would spend the rest of the night there and be on hand in the morning.

He turned the key noiselessly in the lock and went in. The great building lay silent and shadowy as he made his way from room to room, up flight after flight of long stairs, guided only by the sense of touch and familiarity. The darkness about him seemed filled with whispers, plots, counterplots—he felt them vaguely as he climbed—yet with a certain serenity of heart. Simeon would see Dr. Blake. All would be right. Let the master of the road once be master of himself and the shadows would melt. He crossed the upper loft and went into the little room. The air was stifling, after the freshness outside, and he threw open the windows, leaning out to breathe deep. He heard the roar of the engine coming into the yard on the still air and saw the lights gleam through the smoke.

It was a wonderful night. The deep September sky twinkled with stars and far below him the city, dark and mysterious and sad, lifted its glimmering lamps. They broke the darkness, luminous, faint—like some inner meaning. The youth looking down had a sudden quickened sense of power, vast issues, mighty interests. The city slept at his feet, beautiful, relaxed. Fold upon fold of darkness wrapped it round and his heart went out to it—helpless there in the darkness—and in its midst Simeon—asleep or awake—awaiting the new day. A fresh loyalty to the man swelled within him. The

sleeping city touched him in a way he could not name—its mighty power cradled in the night in sleep.

He threw himself on the couch and slept.

It was the lightest click . . . but he sat up, his eyes fixed on darkness. The lock clicked again and the door swung open. He felt it move softly, through the black, and close again. A footstep crossed the floor. John waited. He was leaning forward, staring before him, his slow mind wrestling with the sounds that came and went, lightly. He was unarmed. He had only his hands; he clinched them a little and felt the muscles swell behind them. He was not altogether defenseless!

The sounds puzzled him. They were methodical, deliberate—not as if finding out the way, but as if accustomed to the place and to darkness. . . . Simeon Tetlow, himself?—the thought flashed at him and drew back. . . . A light stole through the gloom—the focused glow of the electric pocket candle on a desk across the room—Simeon's desk.

John leaned forward, holding his breath. . . . Behind the candle a vague form—a massive head and shoulders, bending above the lock of the desk. . . . The key was fitted in and the top lifted. Then, for the first time, the man seemed to hesitate, his head turning itself a little in the shadow and waiting, as if disturbed. The glow of the candle suddenly went out and the steps moved stealthily. John straightened himself—the clinched hand ready. . . . The steps receded slowly and a hand fumbled at the open window, lowering it without sound and drawing down the thick shade. The man moved to the other window and closed it. The youth on the lounge caught the muttered sound of his own name, as if in imprecation. . . . Then the steps again. . . . And suddenly the soft candle—shining in the dark.

The man reached into the half-gloom of the desk for a ledger. He seemed to know without hesitation which he wanted. He opened it and fell to

work, apparently in the middle of a page, the sinister eye of the candle traveling up and down the columns, the scratching pen transcribing figures to a kind of muttered accompaniment.

John recognized the book, in the shadowy light. . . . He ought not to have left it there. He had more than half guessed this thing before. . . . So this was the reason why Hemenway & Hill countermanded their order for fifty cars a week ago and Gardner & Hutchinson changed their mind about shipping their wheat the thirtieth . . . and this thing had been going on for weeks?—months? . . . No, it was only within six weeks that the book had been tampered with. . . . His mind ran back over the time, fitting each coincidence in place. . . . So this was it! It was State prison for the man. . . . But suppose he were not arrested? . . . Suppose he were let to go free—in fear of his life? . . . John, watching, gauged the man, sitting there in the night, his busy pen writing his own doom. . . . He should go on sending the reports. The enemy should have their bulletin from day to day, but it should be compiled by John Bennett. The scribe should have only the work of copying. . . . It might save time if the arrangement were completed now. He moved his hand a trifle toward the wall behind him, groping a little. The next minute the room was a blaze of light and the man at the desk was on his feet, stifling a quick cry—blinking at the looping bulbs of light. He made a swift step toward the door; but someone, broad-shouldered and smiling, stood against it.

"Sit down, Harrington," said John quietly.

The man's hands swung out blindly. Then they fell to his sides. He was panting a little, as if he had come a long distance. But his eyes were fixed on John's face with a little sneer. "Think you're clever, don't you?" he said doggedly.

"I wish I were," said John. "Though it doesn't seem to have done you much good," he added after a moment.

The man's fingers were fumbling at

the desk, striving to gather up and destroy the papers jotted with figures.

"Let those alone!" said John.

The fingers ceased their work, but they still moved restlessly, playing on the air. The sudden fright had done its work. . . . Quietly, bit by bit, John laid the plan before him.

"But I tell you I don't *dare* do it," said the man. His voice was a kind of shrill moan.

"Do you dare *not* to?" asked the young man.

There was silence in the room.

"All right." It was crafty, with a sullen note just below the surface. "You give me the figures and I'll copy 'em and send 'em."

"I will send them," said John slowly, "and so long as you play fair, no one else knows it. But if you betray us by one breath—I give the matter over to President Tetlow—"

The man had started. "No—you won't do that—no!" He was almost covering before him.

John smiled a little, looking down at him. So it was still a name to conjure with! His mind wandered inconsequently to the bag of eggs on the high shelf and the egg-beater hanging on its nail behind the cupboard door. The man little knew that they were President Tetlow. He was still a terror to evildoers. "One breath—and I tell him!" said John sternly.

The man shrank a little. "I'll do it," he said. He, himself, could not have accounted for the fear that held him. He knew that the president of the R. & Q. road was a broken man; he had sworn it to the manager of the C. B. & L.; but none the less he was afraid. A phrase that he had heard long since stirred in his mind: "You don't cross Sim Tetlow and live!" He wanted to live—the assistant bookkeeper—he desired earnestly to live—and to prosper. He had done his best for years—yet it seemed always to evade him.

"I'll do it all right for you—I'll act on the square," he said magnanimously.

"Oh, no, you'll do what you have to," said John.

A sudden hatred of this young man flared in the assistant bookkeeper's heart. Then he remembered the look in Nixon's face—manager of the C. B. & L.—the day he had seen him last. It struck him that the two looks were curiously alike. "I hate Nixon!" he said viciously. "I'll be glad to get one on him."

"Doesn't he pay you well?" asked John.

The man writhed a little. "That's my affair," he said.

"All right. Keep it your affair," said John. "He'll pay you—same as ever—and you're to take it."

The man stared at him. His jaw had dropped a little. He moved toward the door. "You're a deep 'un. I don't want anything to do with you. I can't face Nixon—every month, I tell you. He'd kill me!"

"You face him—or Simeon Tetlow," John said. "You take your choice." He moved back from the door and the man stepped toward it. He opened it quickly and went out. The sound of his footsteps, hurrying as if pursued, died away in the outer loft.

The young man stood for a moment looking thoughtfully at the disordered desk. Then he gathered up the papers and returned the ledger to its place. He locked the desk and turned off the blaze of light before he opened the windows. He stood looking down at the city in the mysterious night. Then he threw himself on the couch and slept till the morning.

XVI

SIMEON was tearing open his morning's mail, fussing and growling.

"There's another—" He tossed it to John.

The young man read it without comment. It was from the farmers of Elk Horn County—the second within a month, accusing the road of keeping back cars to force up rates.

"They've had their share," grumbled Simeon, from his mail.

"More, too," said John. He scowled his brow a little. "No. 8 brought in

thirty-five empties yesterday," he said slowly.

Simeon wheeled a little.

"Where to?"

"Somers—most of them."

"And Somers shall have 'em," said Simeon. He wheeled back again. "Let the Elk Horners run a road of their own. They know so much. Let their press agent get at it. Make cars out o' wind and haul 'em with talk." He plunged again into the mail, tearing and gritting his way through. Suddenly there was silence in the room—a long hush—

The young man looked around.

The president of the road was huddled a little forward, his eyes on a letter that his shaking hands tried in vain to steady.

John stepped quickly to his side. But the man did not look up. His eyes seemed glued to the few lines that covered the page. When the shaking hand dropped to the desk he sat staring at nothing where the lines had been.

John went out noiselessly and mixed an egg and placed it beside him. He knew from the look in Simeon's face that he had not slept, and he guessed that he had had no breakfast.

"You'd better take this, sir," he said quietly.

Simeon's hand groped a little toward it and drew back. "I tell you I can't see him," he said sharply.

"Who is it, sir?"

"Nixon." He touched the paper beside him. "He wants to talk over rates. I tell you, I can't see him—I can't!" It was almost a cry.

The young man took up the letter. "Perhaps you won't need to, sir." His slow eyes were on the words. "It's only the rates," he said thoughtfully.

"Do you believe it?" The president of the road leaned toward him a little, hissing the words at him. "He says what he wants is an appointment for seeing *me*!" He lifted the haggard face, the bitter laugh drawing back the thin lips from his teeth. "What do you think our stock'd be worth him the next day? I tell you it's a trap!" He lifted his shaking hand. He looked

at the light through it. "He wants to see *me*!" he repeated bitterly. "Let him come," he said shrilly; "let him—" The hand dropped to the desk. "I've lost my nerve, John!" he whispered helplessly. "I've lost my nerve!"

"Better take your egg, sir," said John.

Simeon reached out blindly and gulped it down. His hand quivered as he wiped the little yellow line from his lips.

John's eyes were on his face. "Had you thought of seeing Dr. Blake?" he asked.

The hand paused in midair. "Yes—I'd—thought—of that."

The young man picked up the letter. "Wednesday's Nixon's day, isn't it? Why not see Dr. Blake Wednesday?"

The man leaned forward. "What about Nixon?"

"I'll do Nixon, sir," said John.

Simeon stared at him a minute. "What would you say to him?"

"I don't know—yet."

Simeon stared again. Then he chuckled a little. "I believe you could," he said grimly. "He'd go away thinking I was a prize-fighter!"

John's hand rested lightly on the shaking one, holding it firm, and his eyes were on the quivering, driven face. "He'd go away thinking the truth, sir—that you are a big man."

Simeon smiled a little shamefacedly, drawing away the hand. "I'm a big fool," he said shortly; "there isn't a bigger anywhere—except you!"

The young man's face expressed content. "You will see Dr. Blake?"

"I'll see Blake—yes." The shadow had returned again to the face, blotting out hope. He had drawn a sheet of paper toward him. "I'll see Blake if you want me to. But Blake can't help—"

"Blake can, if anybody can," said John stoutly.

"If anybody can—yes." It was a half-whisper. He was writing wearily, like an old man. Presently the pen stopped and he sat staring before him. . . . A little look of hope stole into the face. He took up his cheque-book

and filled in a cheque in his fine, scrawling hand.

He looked around. The young man was hard at work. He waited a minute, impatient. Then he spoke, hesitating a little between the words. "Oh—John——"

"Yes, sir." He came across.

"I thought you might like to make a present—to your friend Tomlinson."

He was holding out the slip of paper indifferently.

The youth looked down. It was a cheque for a thousand dollars. His face lighted with a quick smile. "It looks as if *you* were the friend," he said.

"Tomlinson's no friend of mine," said Simeon gruffly. "But you can send it."

"It shall go today, sir." He was moving away.

Simeon's hand reached out to him. "It's to come from you, you understand?"

The young man paused. He shook his head slowly. "He knows we haven't a cent in the world."

"Make it from the directors, then—for services rendered." He laughed—a little bitterly.

"Yes, sir—from the directors—for services rendered." John wrote the letter and sent it. But he knew that the cheque that went with it was not recorded on the books of the R. & Q. road.

XVII

THE manager of the C. B. & L. was being shown into the president's office—not the little room on the upper floor, but the one with the bronze token on the door. The typewriters had been driven out for the day on some pretext of cleaning.

As the manager entered the office, he saw a young man seated at the desk, his round head and broad back absorbed in work. His impatient eye swept the room—no one else!

"I—ah—I wish to see President Tetlow," he said sharply.

The young man at the desk rose and

turned slowly, facing him. The manager was conscious of a pair of clear, straight eyes looking into his.

"I asked down below for Tetlow," he said a little less brusquely.

"Is it Mr. Nixon?" said John.

"Manager of the C. B. & L.," said the man.

The slow smile on John's face made him welcome. "President Tetlow asked me to see you, sir——"

"Where is he?" There was a flash of suspicion in the tone.

"He was called out of town. An old friend wrote, asking to see him to-day."

"Didn't know Sim Tetlow had any friends—any old ones," said the manager.

"Will you sit down, sir?" said John. He drew forward one of the capacious chairs, and the man sank into it, giving a little nip to each trouser leg, just above the knee, before he settled back comfortably, a hand resting on either arm of the big chair. He glanced about the room. "Comfortable quarters," he said.

The young man was standing opposite him. "President Tetlow asked me to give you any details you might wish, sir, and to represent him as far as I can."

The man in the big chair surveyed him for a moment. "And who might *you* be?" he asked pleasantly. There was more than a hint of irony in the light words.

"I am John Bennett," said the young man.

"Um-m. I am glad to know. And do you hold—any particular position?"

The young man was looking at him steadily. A slow smile had crept into his eyes. "I never thought *what* I am," he said.

The manager smiled too—in spite of himself. "You don't think you've made a mistake in assuming that Tetlow expected you to see me?"

John's eyes were quiet. "No, sir. He said I was to give you all the help I can. I know about the books—orders and correspondence and things like that," he added after a minute. "I can

perhaps tell you what you want to know."

The manager was searching his memory. . . . What was it Harrington had reported—a new private secretary—he might make trouble? Ah, yes. "You have not been here long?" he said abruptly.

"Since June," replied the young man.

"I'm afraid you won't do," said the manager, but with a little more respect in his voice. "The deals I want to talk over go back two or three years."

"I was with President Tetlow then," said John. "I came about four years ago. During the last year I've been off for a while. My mother was ill."

"Mother was ill?" He whistled softly between his teeth. It might, after all, be good luck that Tetlow was away. This simple youth would reveal more in half an hour than Simeon would let out in a week.

He would win his confidence.

He settled back a little in the chair. "Tetlow a hard man to work for?" he asked casually.

John's smile answered his. "I guess everybody thinks so," he said.

The man nodded. "I guess so. They say he's a good deal broken, though—works too hard?"

"He works harder than any man I ever saw," replied John.

"Begins to tell on him, don't it?" The man seemed to be watching a fly on the window.

"You mean—?" John's face expressed slow interest.

"I mean he's about used up," said the manager, flashing a look at him.

John shook his head, and the slow smile grew on his face. "You *think* he's used up and then you find—he isn't. That's the kind of man President Tetlow is."

The manager gave a dry smile. "I've noticed that's the kind he is, myself." He turned suddenly, his eyes boring into the young man. "What's all this bother about rates this year?" he asked. "Don't he know the roads can't stand it?"

"He thinks the country can't stand it," said John.

"The country?" The man stared at him, moistening his lips a little with his tongue. He shook his head. "Never heard of the country before," he said.

John smiled. "President Tetlow wants to make the R. & Q. a benefit to the region."

The man sat back in his chair. He spread his legs a little. Then he opened his mouth. He laughed. There was affectation in the laugh, perhaps, but beneath it was solid amusement and scorn. "Sim Tetlow—philanthropist!" He shook his head, wiping the moisture from the corner of his eye. "Look out for him!" he said.

"You think he don't mean it, sir?" said John.

"I think he don't mean it," said the big man.

John's clear eyes looked into the small fat ones and the man stirred a little in his chair and sat up. "Do you believe it?" he asked.

"I know it," said John. "He doesn't start out on things he can't carry through."

"That's right," muttered the man. His face was thoughtful.

"He's always run the road before for the corporation. He's running it now for everybody."

"Well, it's beyond me—I don't make money for everybody." He seemed to be digesting it.

The young man had taken up some papers from the desk. "President Tetlow wanted me to ask you about these," he said.

"What are they?" The man swung his eyeglasses to his nose and held out his hand.

"They are affidavits—about those harvesters—"

"Oh!" The manager sank back a little. He took off the glasses, tapping the table with them. "Well?"

"He wanted me to ask what you are going to do about it," said John.

"What does he expect we'll do?" It was smooth and non-committal.

John consulted the paper. "He expects you'll pay for them."

A little look of scorn crossed the man's face. "Oh, no. I guess not."

"He asked me to say that otherwise he will take action."

The man's face fell a little. "Take it into court—he can't win."

"They've just won against the Lake Shore—those planting machines."

"That was Indiana," said the man quickly.

"Yes, that was Indiana. But McKinnon has three or four other similar cases, scattered about. He says they've all won."

"I told Buxton it was a fool thing to do!" muttered the man half under his breath.

"That's what President Tetlow said," remarked John quietly.

"Um-m—did he? What else did he say?"

John smiled a little. "He said if you were going to try to do him, it was safer to do him inside the law."

"H'm-m—how much is he going to stick us for?"

"Twelve thousand."

"Can't do it," said the man. He sat up very straight and folded his fingers across his stomach, guarding his rights.

"He said it would be worth that—the whole district has suffered. The crop's a dead loss."

"Why don't he let them fight for themselves?"

"I guess he thinks he's more used to it than they are."

The manager of the C. B. & L. looked at him a moment. "Tell him we'll settle for ten thousand—and not a cent more."

John made a note. "I'll tell him, sir."

The man was not in a good humor. The calm eyes of the young man and a certain sense of moral inferiority that came upon him made him restless; and the obvious respect that this young man felt for the president of the R. & Q. was not encouraging. But it occurred to the manager suddenly that every man has his price and he drew a little breath of relief, relaxing in his chair.

Ten minutes later, when he took up his hat to go, he could not, for the life of him, have told whether the young man,

holding open the door for him, was too stupid or too virtuous to take advantage of a very good offer that had been dangled before him. But he had a distinct impression that he should like to overhear some young man in his employ speak of him as this young man was speaking of Simeon Tetlow.

As he went through the outer room, the manager of the C. B. & L. passed very close to a desk where a bookkeeper was busy with columns of figures. But the manager did not glance that way and the bookkeeper did not lift his busy eyes from the page before him.

XVIII

THE typewriters had been re-installed in the president's office and John, in the little upper room, was giving the president of the road a detailed account of the preceding day—including the visit from the manager of the C. B. & L.

"That's good," said Simeon. "That's good—as far as it goes." But his thin face still wore an anxious look and he sat slouched a little forward, his eyes on the floor. The morning's mail lay on the desk behind him, untouched.

John's eyes turned to it. "You saw Dr. Blake?"

Simeon stirred uneasily. "Yes." He drew a quick sigh and turned toward the desk. "Yes, I saw him."

He glanced at the mail, but he did not touch it. His hand seemed to have lost volition and when John spoke again he gave no sign that he had heard.

The young man stepped to him quickly and touched his arm.

The man looked down at it vacantly. Then he lifted his hand and touched the spot where the hand had rested. He looked up, a thin, anxious smile quivering his face. "I can't seem to think—" he said.

"You're tired out," said John promptly. "Did you have any breakfast?"

"Yes, I had—I think I had it——"
"What was it?"

He ran his hand across his forehead. Then he looked at John. "I can't seem

to think," he said helplessly. "I think I'm sleepy. . . . I'm so sleepy."

The young man helped him to the couch and stood looking down at him. The eyelids had fallen and he seemed in a light slumber; his face still wore its seamed and exhausted look, but the anxiety had left it. He breathed lightly, like a child.

After a minute John turned away and gave himself to the work of the office. No one came to break the quiet and the figure on the couch did not stir.

Late in the afternoon he sat up and rubbed his eyes, looking confusedly about the office. "I've been asleep!" he said in a tone of surprise.

"Are you rested, sir?"

"First-rate." He shook himself a little and got up from the couch. "Mail come?"

"Yes, sir." He handed him the letters. "I've answered these." He handed him another pile ready for signature.

Simeon read them through with untroubled face and signed those that were ready. He seemed more like himself than John had seen him for weeks; but the young man, watching him anxiously, was afraid to question him again.

When the letters were finished Simeon turned to him with a smile. "Blake's an old granny!" he said.

The young man made no reply. His steady eyes were on the thin face.

Simeon nodded reassuringly. "I'm all right. You'd 'a' thought to hear him talk the funeral was tomorrow." He gave a short laugh. "I guess he hypnotized me for a spell. I knew I'd be all right as soon as I got back to you." He smiled at the youth affectionately.

"What did he say?" asked John.

Simeon reflected. "Said I must stop—right off. Be an idiot if I didn't. Idiot if I did!" he muttered shortly.

"You *could* stop—for a while?" It was the merest suggestion.

But the man turned fiercely—the old trembling awake in him. "You don't know! You *can't* know!" He threw the words from him. "You've staved

off Nixon. But there are other things—worse things than Nixon——"

"I don't know anything much worse," said John quietly.

Simeon stared at him a minute. Then he turned it aside with a motion of his hand. He leaned forward, speaking low and fast: "The directors—two weeks off—two weeks. I *must* stay, I tell you!"

"Yes, sir." It was the old tone of quiet deference and Simeon yielded to it.

"Give me two weeks," he said more quietly. "Let me meet them with a straight record—and then——"

"And then?" The watching eyes held him.

"Then I'll go," he said grudgingly—"if you make me."

John weighed it for a minute. "Did you ask Dr. Blake about the two weeks?" he said.

Simeon fidgeted at his desk.

"Did you?"

"Yes." It was a growl, half defiant.

The silence in the room was unbroken. John began to arrange things for the night. The man at the desk watched him, resentful—suspicious.

When the room was in order the young man came across. He placed his hand on Simeon's shoulder. "All ready, sir."

Simeon started a little. He motioned to the chair. "Sit down."

The young man sat down, looking at him quietly.

Simeon was holding a paper, fingering it absently; he had retained it when John put away the others, covering it with his hand. He glanced down at it now once or twice, as if about to speak. But when he opened his lips it was not the paper.

"Blake doesn't know," he said harshly.

The young man's face clouded. "Don't you trust him, sir?"

Simeon spun the paper a little contemptuously on the desk. "I trust him—yes—I trust Blake where he knows."

"He knows about you, sir." John, remembering the minute accounts he

had given of Simeon's condition, smiled a little as he said it.

But the eyes looking into his did not smile. They held a kind of dumb fear, and the man shook his head. "He doesn't know——"

"Why didn't you tell him, sir?"

"I couldn't!" He glanced cautiously over his shoulder and lowered his voice. "He wouldn't have believed—nobody'd believe——!"

"But he might help, sir."

The man shook his head dully. "He can't help. Nobody can help—I've had my chance——" He broke off and sat staring before him, as if at some nameless thing.

The young man watched him with perplexed eyes. Something mysterious, terrible, held the man in its grip—some intangible thing. Almost, it seemed to him, he could put out his hand and touch it. Then, in a breath, it was not there. . . . There was only Simeon, sitting with pitifully bowed head, fingering the paper.

He looked up after a minute. "The Bardwell lease expires today," he said, holding up the paper.

John nodded. He was not thinking of the Bardwell lease. He was trying to follow the elusive clue that had looked out at him and withdrawn. . . .

"The road takes possession tomorrow," said Simeon.

"Yes, sir." John's mind came back to the farm.

"I'd thought——" Simeon hesitated—"I'd thought we might put someone on, for the Winter."

"Rent it?" asked John.

"No—we can't rent it till Spring; nobody would want it now, but we could put someone on." He waited a minute. "There's your friend—Tomlinson——"

John leaned forward, his face alight. "He'd like it, sir. He used to live on a farm—in Scotland."

"I judged as much," said Simeon drily. "He can have it, rent free, till Spring. Then the road will talk about terms—we sha'n't be hard on him." He said the last words with a little

gulp. He was looking down at the paper trembling in his hands.

"He will like it," said John heartily. "And it will be good for the little Tomlinsons—there are two children, you know?"

"I don't know anything about them," said Simeon wearily. "I don't care—whether there are children—or not. He can have the farm, if he wants it, rent free." He looked about for his hat. "I'm going home," he said. "I'm tired."

The freshness of his sleep had left him. He was old and haggard once more. And John, as he handed him his hat, was struck anew by the misery in the face.

"I am going in a minute, sir. Don't you want me to walk along with you, sir?"

"No, no. I'm all right. Stay and write your letter. You'd better send it tonight."

XIX

He went slowly toward the door—a bent old man. But at the door he paused and looked back, his lip moving tremulously.

John sprang toward him. "What is it, sir?"

"I can't go—away—not before the fifth—two weeks. Blake must give me that two weeks! You know what it means—if I go now!" His voice was harsh and he lifted his gaunt, shaking hand to the broad shoulder that bent toward him. "It's ruin—John—for the road! I can't do it! It's my life!"

The strong hand reached up to the quivering one and drew it down, holding it fast. "You shall not go, sir. You shall stay here till the fifth—and save the road." The low, quiet tone was full of confidence.

But Simeon's voice broke across it harshly. "Blake said he wouldn't give me a day—not twenty-four hours!" he said hoarsely. "You should have heard him talk!" He shuddered a little.

"Never mind, sir," said John. "You shall stay—if you want to."

The helpless eyes devoured his face. "I can't!" He half whispered the words. "I'm afraid!"

"Listen, sir," John's face was close to his and a kind of power seemed to pass from the clear eyes into the wavering ones. "You shall stay if you want to."

"If I want to?" repeated Simeon vaguely.

"Yes. Listen." He had led him back to his chair and placed him in it. "Now I will tell you."

Simply, as if to a child, John laid the plan before him. It was not something new—thought of on the spur of the moment. For weeks the youth had seen the approach of some such crisis as this, and his slow mind had been making ready for it, working out the details with careful exactness. If the road could be tided over the semi-annual meeting, everything was saved. In spite of the attacks of the C. B. & L. and in spite of Simeon's quixotic schemes for the country, there would be a comfortable dividend to declare. And with Simeon at the head of the table—not a wreck apparently, but the competent, keen-witted man whom the directors knew and trusted—all would be well. After that, let rumors get abroad. The directors would buy up any frightened stock that might be thrown on the market. There could be no attack on the road, with their confidence unshaken.

Simeon's face, as he listened, lost its strained look and his lips seemed to move to the slow words that unfolded the plan to him.

"You could do it?" questioned John.

"I can do it," said Simeon with a deep breath. "It's easy—after what I have been through."

"You are to do as I tell you—exactly."

"There's Blake," said Simeon, the look of fear coming back to his face.

"I'll see Blake," said John promptly. "Now, you are going home to rest, sir. I'll write the letter to Tomlinson and then I'm through."

"Yes—yes, write the letter to Tomlinson," said Simeon. "The sooner the better."

And John, as he sat down to write it, had no glimpse of the clue that was laughing at him to his face while his pen moved over the paper; he had no suspicion that the farm, offered rent free, was a last desperate attempt to lift a Scotch curse. He saw only Tomlinson's face when he should read the letter, and the children playing on the Bardwell farm.

The physician gave his consent reluctantly. "You may carry it through, but it's a great risk. He ought to stop now—at once."

"He's more quiet, sir," said John, "less nervous. He wants to sleep—falls asleep at his desk sometimes."

Dr. Blake smiled a little grimly. "The next stage will not be so quiet," he said. "Best not tempt nature too far."

John's face grew thoughtful. "It would kill him to do it."

"To stop now—what's the difference—two weeks, or now?"

He listened as John laid the facts of the case before him. "But he's rich—even if the road goes to pieces. Better lose the road than his reason—his life!"

John smiled. "I think the road is his reason—his life. He has lived in it so long that he doesn't quite know, I think, which is road and which is Simeon Tetlow."

The physician was looking with interest at this stupid, slow-speaking young man, who seemed to put his finger so exactly on the truth.

He nodded. "Yes, I know—organic, almost. But there are other roads. He could build up another. He's a young man still—young in years. Let him recover and he will be as eager to fight as ever."

"It isn't quite that, sir." The slow mind groped for prosaic words in which to clothe Simeon's radiant dream. "He's not fighting just for love of it. He thinks the country has been injured—the road has made money out of it without paying back—and he wants to make good. If the road goes to pieces—if the C. B. & L. buys it up—

he could never do it. I think it would kill him."

The physician's head was bent in thought. "So Sim Tetlow loves men—like that—as much as that!" He looked up candidly. "Do you know, I should have said that there was nobody in the world he would turn his hand over for. And now you tell me he's been killing himself for farmers."

The young man's face flushed a little. "I don't think it's farmers, sir, nor—nor—anybody. It's just the country!"

The physician looked at him a minute. "I see—it's impersonal."

"Yes, sir. But the country is like a person to him. I think he loves it. And I know he wants to make up for the harm he's done it. I think it would kill him to give up—now. Two weeks will do it."

"Well—well. You take the risk, you understand?"

"Yes, sir." The clear eyes met his.

The physician's looked into them with quiet scrutiny. "You're very fond of him," he said.

"I love him, sir," said the young man.

"I don't know why you should," said the physician.

The slow smile met his. "I don't know, either. I think he needs me."

"I think he does," said the physician drily, "more than he knows."

XX

THE morning of the fifth of October was keen and crisp; a hint of rime lay on the grass and the air was filled with flecks of light. It was a beautiful country that the R. & Q. passed through—hills and valleys, long stretches of wood and wide sweeps of grain, and slopes where the orchards crept to the sky, the trees gold and green, and burdened with fruit.

To the directors of the R. & Q., looking out from their comfortable parlor-cars on the trees and fields as they sped toward Bayport, it seemed a land

of fatness and dividends. Tetlow would attend to all those trees. He had never failed since the first day he laid his nervous, wiry hand upon the road; he had wrested the last cent from it; and the road, trees, barns, elevators, jingled into their pockets. They beamed upon the fertile land as they journeyed through, noting the signs of plenty with philanthropic eye. There had been rumors of trouble, complaints, shortage of cars. What wonder—with branches loaded to the ground, or propped with staves, and the grain bending with its weight. They smiled at each other. They knew their man—a giant, keen-sighted and far-reaching, feared throughout the country up and down. When he lifted his hand the little animals scudded to their holes, and lesser men made way before him. If the directors did not put the figure into words, they felt it—through all their comfortable being, as they slid along. Simeon Tetlow—great man—prosperous R. & Q.—fortunate directors!

They felt it as they took their way to the offices of the R. & Q. and seated themselves in the capacious chairs about the green table. Tetlow was a little late—they looked inquiringly toward the door. He was not often late . . . sometimes hurried and driven, but never late. . . . Was Simeon Tetlow late! The door opened and he came in with a little flurry, dipping subtly to left and right, in short, brusque greeting, and taking his seat. They settled back in their chairs, scarcely noting the short, square young man, a little to his left, who followed in his wake.

But when Simeon was seated the young man remained standing, and they took him in with careless glance.

Their eyes returned to Tetlow. But he motioned with slight gesture to the young man and they looked at him again.

He stepped forward with a little smile. "President Tetlow cannot speak," he said.

They looked with startled eyes at the president of the road. He nodded re-

assuringly and touched his throat with his hand. He opened his lips a little as if to speak, but no sound came. He shook his head.

Then they understood. He had lost his voice—a cold, probably, or unusual strain upon it. They nodded their sympathy to him, as if they, too, were suddenly struck dumb. He smiled acknowledgment and touched his throat, and motioned to the boy.

He had stood with eyes lowered, waiting while the pantomime went on; it was the only part that he feared. He had drilled his patient carefully. But his breath came a little fast. So many things might happen. Then he looked up and met the directors' gaze fixed upon him expectantly. He consulted the paper in his hand and bent to the pile that lay on the table before him.

"President Tetlow wishes to present first the report as a whole." He took up a handful of the papers. "He has had duplicate copies made for further reference." He passed the handful of papers to the senior director at the right of the board.

It was a thrifty device—thought out in the night watches while he could not sleep. Simeon had never before allowed written reports. This was unexpected convenience.

The senior member reached out his hand with a bland smile, swinging his gold eyeglasses to his nose and surveying the figures. He nodded affably.

The young man stood watching with slow look while the papers traveled down the length of the table. . . . It was only a guess at human nature. . . . Would it work? Would they study the figures—or Simeon Tetlow's face? There was too much written on it for them not to see if they sat there and looked at it. His eyes deepened as he watched them, waiting respectfully on their convenience. The last paper reached the hand stretched out for it and he glanced swiftly up and down the double row of faces, every eye buried in a paper.

He drew a quick breath and began to read in clear, even tone. There was no sense of hurry in the voice, but the words

passed in swift flow. He knew to a minute how long it would take and how long Simeon Tetlow would keep the cool, inscrutable smile.

He was listening, his head a little bent, to the even flow of words. John did not dare to think ahead or see more than one minute at a time. For two weeks his one thought had been to get through this meeting. He had planned the day carefully. It was after the periods of heavy sleep that Simeon was most like himself, and he had wakened him from a long nap this morning, brushing his clothes and placing the papers in his hand.

"It is the fifth, sir," he had said.

And Simeon had looked at him with a bit of the old, keen smile.

"You are to meet the directors," said John close in his ear. "You remember?" He looked at him anxiously.

Simeon had nodded reassuringly. "I know. *I'm* all right—I can *look* all right." He had said it almost like himself.

And then John had taken him by the arm and led him to the door of the room and pushed him in. Only at the door had he dared release his hold.

But he need not have feared. To the president of the R. & Q. road the green table, with those mighty, iron-bounded men around it, was like a challenge. He had entered the room with positive *éclat*; and now he sat with quiet face listening to the report, a little cynical smile edging his lips.

It was the look the directors knew well. They trusted it. They looked up from their paper. It was the old dividend look.

John's eye dropped to it for a moment and his voice quickened a little. He had come to a difficult part of the report. It was delicate treading here—"Equipment for the coming year: Thirty-nine new engines will be needed—twelve of the big Pacific type, the numbers running from 3,517 to 3,528, and ten combination fast freight and passenger engines of the 2,000 series. The other seventeen——"

He felt the board quiver subtly. They stirred in their places. He knew,

without looking up, the inquiring glances gathering on the impassive face at the head of the table. . . .

"The other seventeen will be switching engines and the heaviest kind of freight engines. . . ." The voice went quietly on, but his hand had dropped ever so lightly on the shoulder beside him as he turned a page of the report. The shoulder straightened beneath the touch. The president of the road looked up and nodded to the swift, darting glances—once—twice, the old, keen, reassuring look, intrepid and cool.

The directors turned the page with easier fingers, but a new alertness was in the air. These were details that anyone could grasp—with their implications. . . . "Six hundred box cars—forty passenger coaches, each to cost \$6,500." The look of sleepy content was banished from the board.

But the president of the road met the glances that traveled toward him with steady front. The figures had startled the directors, but they seemed as music in his ears. "Thirty-nine engines—twelve of the big Pacific type" sang to him! He sat a little straighter, his quick nod assenting to each detail and vouching for items that might so easily have stirred a challenge.

The directors had no eyes for the young man taking the papers from Tetlow's hand, reading them one by one. He was hardly more than a voice. They did not note that the stubby hand as it reached out to take a paper from the trembling one closed upon it firmly and that the hand ceased to shake. When the next item was read the hand lifted itself from the table with a little gesture of pride and assent. The proposed improvements and equipment would cost a round million—but the road could stand a million dollars—and more. The lifted hand had said this eloquently before it dropped. The room breathed more easily, and into the voice that read the time there crept a quiet note of relief.

Twenty minutes more.

Ten minutes—now.

Five minutes.

The president of the road swayed a little toward the table. He might be consulting the paper in his hand—it was the last one—before he handed it to the sturdy young man beside him to read.

The young man leaned toward him to take it, his shoulders blotting out for a moment the thin, bent ones. When his shoulders straightened themselves the president of the R. & Q. was erect in his chair, his inscrutable face turned toward the directors.

The young man read rapidly from the paper. It was a summary of items. They had the substance of it already—this only gathered it into smaller compass for them, the quiet voice seemed to assure them, as it went swiftly to the end.

"There is one point not included in the former report that the president intended to speak to you about." He had laid down the paper and was looking at them.

They returned the glance, finding a certain pleasure in this sturdy young man.

Simeon looked up with a little startled glance. The hand touched his arm carelessly and rested there while the voice went on speaking.

"It had been President Tetlow's wish to ask for a leave of absence—to take effect at your pleasure——"

The arm beneath the hand stirred and Simeon's mouth opened with a little inarticulate sound.

The directors glanced at him with sympathetic, humorous smiles.

The senior director was on his feet proposing a motion. Three other directors, all on their feet, were seconding it. It was carried with a little informal burst of enthusiasm.

Simeon rose to his feet. It was as if he thought that he could respond.

The directors were looking at him with expectant faces.

He bowed toward them and opened his lips—and broke into a long, deep, helpless cough.

John put up his hand to the directors, smiling, and escorted him swiftly to the door. . . .

There was a pleasant hurry of sound

among the directors, a getting into light overcoats and shaking of hands, a murmur of dividends, and a rush for trains.

Up in the little office Simeon Tetlow stood by the window. He held up his hand—groping, trembling toward the light. He looked at it, and tried to hold it still—and still looked at it—the light falling faintly through it. . . . "They trust me, John! They trust me! But how dare they trust me!" The shaking hand flickered its quivering, helpless dance against the light.

The young man drew it down, covering it, as always, with his own. "They trust you, sir, because you've never failed them," he said quietly.

XXI

THE assistant bookkeeper was finishing his accounts for the night. He made another entry and blotted it before he closed the book and looked up with a little offhand nod.

The young man moved toward him. "President Tetlow asked me to tell you something, Harrington." They were alone in the room, but he spoke in a low tone.

The bookkeeper's shoulders squared themselves a little. He had expected this. He had known it would come—with the directors' meeting. He jabbed his pen in a cup of shot and lifted his face sullenly. "Well?" His tone, too, was low.

"They raised you five hundred at the meeting," said John.

The bookkeeper stared at him. Then his eyes dropped. He studied his nails for a minute. "What are you talking about?" he muttered.

"Five hundred dollars—to begin Monday," said John.

The bookkeeper looked up under his lids, without lifting his head. "What do you mean?" he said slowly.

John waited a minute. When he spoke a little smile edged the words. "I thought you'd like to know right off—so you could write the C. B. & L.

that you won't be able to do anything for them after today."

"Didn't it work?" sneered the man.

"It worked too well," said John. "They've lost a good twenty thousand these two weeks—trying to fix it—and the twenty thousand is ours. But we don't do business that way—not unless we have to," he added with slow emphasis.

The man looked up. "How are you going to keep tab on me?" he demanded.

"Won't the five hundred keep tab?" asked John.

The man's smile was wintry. "The C. B. & L. did better," he said.

"Yes—they knew what they were paying for—they thought they knew. The R. & Q. doesn't."

The man stirred a little. "All right. It's a go." He took up his pen and tried the nib on his thumb nail. His eyes were fixed on it. "Cheaper to fire me," he said, dipping the pen into the ink.

"Do you think so?" said John. "Wait a minute, Harrington."

The pen paused.

"The R. & Q. will need straight men the next six months—men that will stand by."

The man nodded. He was not looking up.

"I have an idea, somehow—" The young man hesitated. Then he laughed out. "I've watched you, you know," he said frankly. "I've had an eye on you."

"Two of them," said Harrington.

"Yes, and I've come to think you may be one of the best men the road's got."

"That's what I've thought," said the man drily.

"I don't know how you came to be in the C. B. & L. mixup," said John quickly, "but I think you stood by them as long as you could—"

"That's me," said the man.

"—and did their dirty work for them," added John.

The man's face clouded a little.

"The R. & Q. wants that kind of men for clean work—" He paused, seeking the right words. "I'm not

"clever, you know," said John. He raised his clear eyes to the man's face. The face sneered a little—then it changed subtly. "I believe you're speaking God's truth," he said soberly.

"I believe I am," said John. "I'm not clever—I know it. But the road needs men that are—men that know enough to be rascals and won't," he added quietly.

The man looked at him a minute. Then he laughed—a long, full laugh. It had a hint of fellowship in it. "You're a rum 'un," he said.

John smiled. "Thank you." He held out his hand. "It's a bargain?"

The man hesitated a minute. Then he took the hand. "I should think I could give five hundred dollars' worth of honesty—and I'd like to give as much over as I can afford." He said it lightly. But there was a little ring to the words, and the sullen look had vanished from his face.

"That's all right," said John. He nodded and was gone.

The assistant bookkeeper sat staring at the pen in his hand. "A rascal," he chuckled, "but not a fool rascal—he said it straight, didn't he?" He chuckled again. He drew the sheet of paper toward him. Then he looked up as if a sudden thought had struck him—"and *he's* no fool either!" he said slowly. The pen began its letter to the manager of the C. B. & L.

When it reached the manager he threw it on his desk with an exclamation of disgust.

"What's up?" said the superintendent.

"Harrington."

"What?"

"Backed out," said the manager.

"More money?"

"I don't think so." He consulted the letter. "Says he's sick of it—the whole business."

"Virtuous?—his virtue hasn't been of much use the last few weeks," suggested the superintendent.

"Nobody's any use," said the manager tartly. The two weeks' losses had worn on his nerves. . . . "There's

a man in that office I should like to get," added the manager after a minute. "He's young—sort of a boy. But I've a notion we could use him—if we knew what he'd cost."

The manager of the C. B. & L. meditated, off and on, the next few days what John would cost. He never arrived at any conclusion that quite satisfied him. Just as he had fixed up on the bait that should tempt a young man who had his way to make in the world—a pair of clear blue eyes confronted him, shining mistily, and when he looked into them they seemed to expand and fill the world. There was a deep, still glow about that boy when he spoke of Tetlow that made him feel the boy was beyond him.

The manager of the C. B. & L. was a practical man, and when in the process of calculation he ran up against the eyes of a young man he swore softly under his breath.

XXII

JOHN was turning the question in his mind all day—where the president should spend his vacation. But each route that he blocked out presented at some point an insuperable obstacle and he was forced back to the starting point to begin over. . . . The place must be far enough from the road so that Simeon would not be reminded of its existence, yet near enough for John to return to his mother at an hour's notice.

He had watched her with special care in the days that preceded the directors' meeting. . . . If she should grow worse and he could not leave her . . . ? But his mind came back hopefully to rest again in the look in her face. She would not fail him. She was even more eager than he in planning for his absence—Caleb would be with her. She was stronger than she had been. The change to the city had been good for her. Caleb would do the work, and in the city it was easier than in Bridgewater to get help—the cooking and baking, some of it, could be

bought from the little white shop around the corner. She entered into the plan as if the journey were to be made for her sake rather than for Simeon's. And John, watching her knew that she was really better. The change to the new house and its surroundings had been good for her. There was even a little pink tinge in her cheeks sometimes, and she declared that the very cracks in the ceiling in the new house were restful to look at as she lay in bed. She had never known how full of pain and wakefulness the old cracks were until they had been suddenly lifted from her. The new cracks should have only hope in them, she said, with a little smile; they should be filled with beautiful things—the light that came in at the east window for her—she had not had an east window at home—and Caleb's pleasure in his new work and in his garden. Her window overlooked the garden, and she lay for hours looking out at it and at the sky. . . . There was not much in the garden yet. But Caleb pottered about in it, setting out the roots and shrubs he had brought from home, preparing the asparagus beds and strawberry beds, and trimming up the few trees and shrubs that bordered it. He was very contented working in the warm October sun inside the high fence. The roots of his being stirred softly, making ready to strike down into the new mold and rest there gently as they had rested in the old garden at home. By Spring he would hardly know the change—any more than the daffodils and the jonquils that he had planted in a corner by the fence with some lilies-of-the-valley.

He had been at work in the garden the day of the directors' meeting, and he watched the boy as he came slowly up the street, his head bent in thought. Caleb gathered up his tools with little regretful, backward looks. He had meant to set out that last row of asparagus tonight—but it was late and the boy looked tired. He set the asparagus plants in the little shed he had improvised for his tools and covered

them carefully against the night air. Then he went into the house.

The mother and the boy were talking in the next room softly and he thought he would not disturb them. He fussed about, setting the table and making tea. Even when they were seated at table Caleb paid little heed to what was being said; his mind was still digging in the garden, out in the soft mold.

Then a word caught his ear and he looked up. "What's that you were saying, Johnny—about a farm?"

"It's about President Tetlow. He has to go away, you know."

Caleb's interest relaxed. "I thought it was something about a farm." He returned to his plate.

"I said I wished there were some farm he could go to——"

"Farms enough," said Caleb.

"Do you know a good one?" The boy and his mother both leaned forward. They had turned the question over and over. They had not once thought of Caleb, who knew the region by heart.

He chewed slowly. "There's a place up Chester County way," said he at last, his eyes fixed on his plate as he chewed.

"I used to work there when I was a boy."

"That's too far away," said John.

"You want to be near-by, do ye?"

"But not too near the railroad."

Caleb's slow mind started on its new quest. "There's a place up from Bridgewater a ways—it's off the road. You might hear a toot clear nights, maybe—but much as ever——"

"Who owns it?"

Caleb shook his head. "Nice folks used to live there—the Griswolds—but I heerd somewhere 't they'd sold——"

A quick look shot into the boy's face. "You don't mean the old Bardwell farm?"

"That's the place," said Caleb. "I was thinking about that little house on the creek, about half a mile 'cross lots from the farmhouse. Anybody'd be quiet enough there."

"The Tomlinsons are there," said John thoughtfully.

"There by the creek?" asked Caleb.

"No, in the farmhouse. I don't suppose there's anybody in the little house."

"It could be fitted up," said his mother quickly. "That's better than boarding; and you must not do the work—with all that will come on you besides—Mrs. Tomlinson would cook for you."

"Ellen Tomlinson is a powerful good cook," said Caleb solemnly. "I've e't her victuals many a time."

"I'll go down tomorrow," said John. "We can have the little house, I know—it belongs to the road—and I'll put in a few camping things. If Ellen won't cook for us, we'll make shift somehow."

"You must not do it," said his mother.

"It's good air," said Caleb—"high up."

"And very still there—the top of the world," said his mother, with a little flitting sigh.

"It's just the place," said John. Then he hesitated a minute. Hugh Tomlinson's face had suddenly flashed before him—the red-rimmed eyes—and the high, quavering voice. . . . Would Simeon object to his presence? He had always refused to speak of Tomlinson and he was gruffly silent when his name was mentioned. . . . But he had put him on the farm—rent free—and he had sent the cheque—a thousand dollars. . . . John weighed the chances—and even while he hesitated an instinct deeper than reason told him that the old Scotchman's presence must be concealed from Simeon's knowledge. . . . He might not mind. But there must be no risk.

"Tomorrow," he said, "I'll go to see the Tomlinsons and get the house ready."

The old Scotchman surveyed him with keen eyes. "He wants to come here? Sim Tetlow wants to come *here*—to this farm!"

"Not here," said John. "He'll be at the little house—down by the creek, you know."

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The switchman was silent for a while. "A man can do what he likes wi' his own," he said at last gruffly. "He owns the farm. I'll go."

"I hope you won't go," John said quickly. "We need someone to cook for us—good, nourishing food—and I was going to ask your wife—"

The old man's eyes still pierced him. "Ye think Sim Tetlow'll get well on food 't my Ellen'd cook? Choke him!" he said.

John waited a minute. "I wasn't going to tell him who cooked it. I thought he didn't need to know." He turned and looked at the man beside him. "He needs all the help we can give him, Hugh. He's desperate."

A slow, deep smile had come into the Scotch eyes. They glimmered to little points and sought the distant horizon. "He must e'en take his fate," said the old man grimly, "wi' the rest o' us."

"But we can help him," said John. "I feel it. You can help—"

"I'll do naught for him," said the man sternly. "She's within door and ye can ask *her*. If she'll cook for Sim Tetlow, I'll bide by what she says. I'll not lift a hand to hinder—or help." He moved toward the barn, walking with huge strides like some grim, implacable fate.

John watched him for a moment. Then he turned and knocked on the farmhouse door.

When he lifted the latch the little old woman by the stove looked up, bending gentle eyes upon him. She set down the frying-pan and came forward, the smile on her face like the October sunshine outside. "It's Johnny Bennett," she said, "and I was telling Hugh but the morning I'd be glad to see him."

The young man took the outstretched hand with a sudden lifting of heart. He forgot the gaunt figure striding from him, and saw only the gentle, wrinkled face in its prim Scotch cap, beaming with light.

In a dozen words he had laid the story before her. She listened with intent eyes, her fingers plating the edge of her apron in tiny folds. When he

had finished the apron-dropped from her fingers and she smoothed the plaits one by one.

"He's been a hard man to us, Johnny."

"Yes."

"But I'll do it for ye."

"I knew you would." It came from a full heart, and she smiled a little to him as she gave a final, smoothing touch to the apron. "He sent us the cheque, and it was bitter bread we bought with it. But the bread I bake for him will be sweet," she said.

"Thank you, Ellen." He held out his hand. "It's good in you to do it, and what money can pay for—you shall have, you know."

"Money won't pay for the bread I shall bake him, Johnny," she said slowly, "but he's welcome to it, and may the Lord bless it—to him."

XXIII

SIMEON TETLOW, in the little house by the creek, was growing stronger.

There had been days of waiting—long, slow days when he sat dully passive, staring before him, or lay upon the camp bed in a deep sleep. When he woke he took the food that John brought him, and fell asleep again.

Little by little unseen fingers had come in the silence and smoothed the lines from the sleeping face, touching the fevered cheeks to coolness. . . . He slept now like a child, breathing lightly, and when he woke his eyes were clear and fresh—only somewhere in the depths lurked a little shadow that nothing could efface.

The shadow kept tally on their days. When it lightened John's heart sang and when it deepened he set himself anew to his task.

For the first days he had not left his patient night or day—except for the brief journeys across the woodlot to the farmhouse to bring the food that Ellen cooked. Later, when Simeon was able to walk a little; and needed less care, he had made occasional trips to the office of the road.

It was during one of these trips that a new factor had entered into the case. The young man had been gone since early morning and the house was very quiet, deepening in the long silence to a kind of presence. The October sun poured in at the windows and a late fly buzzed in the white light on the pane.

Simeon glanced at it. Then he went and stood by the window looking out. His eye traveled along the little path that lost itself in the bushes and undergrowth at the left.

It was a path that John had unwittingly worn in his daily journeys to the farmhouse. But Simeon did not know this, he did not even know that it was a path. He did not guess that along it a tiny figure was trudging, bringing him health in both her fat little hands.

He went back and sat down by the fire, sighing a little. It was an open fire that blazed and crackled, and as he watched it he dozed.

The hand on the latch startled him and he sat up—awake. . . . John was early. . . . He turned his expectant face to the door. It swung open silently, as if unseen hands had pushed it, and he sprang up, trembling.

. . . No one was there. . . . Then his eye dropped a little and he stood still—staring at her.

She was very little, and she was very round and fat, and her cheeks laughed and her curls danced, and her stout little legs, in their heavy stockings, had a sturdy sense of achievement. She looked at him gravely. Then she turned and placing both hands on the door pushed it shut.

He had not stirred from his place. His eyes were following her, half doubting. . . . She was not more real than some of the visions that had haunted his tired eyes. . . . But much more charming!

She confronted the closed door for a moment with a little air of triumph. Then she nodded at it and turned and came toward him across the room, her face lifted:

But still he did not speak. He had

moistened his lips a little with his tongue and his breath came quickly.

She seated herself on a packing-box that served as a chair and crossed her fat legs at the ankle. She nodded gravely. "I am Ellen," she said in a clear, sweet voice. "Who are you?"

He moistened his lips again, still staring. Then a humorous light crept into the eyes, "I am—Simeon," he said gravely.

She nodded again. "I like Cinnamon. Granny makes them—round ones—cookies. I like 'em."

"And who is Granny?" he asked.

"She is—Granny," replied the child. "Do you live here?" Her direct eyes were on his face.

"Yes, I—live—here." He said the words slowly and a little sadly.

"Who does your work?" she asked promptly.

He leaned toward her, very serious. "A fairy," he said.

She slipped from the box and came toward him, her face aglow. "Where is it?" she demanded. She stood before him very straight—courage and health and swift relief in every line of the swift little body.

He half put out a hand, but she stirred a little and he withdrew it, leaning back in his chair and gazing with half-shut eyes into the flame. "You can't see a fairy, you know," he said quietly.

She had bent forward, a hand on either knee, peering intently into the fire. She straightened herself. "Don't you see it?" she asked. "Not ever?" A disappointed look was in the eyes.

He shook his head. "They come at night, you know."

The brown eyes searched his face. Then the curls wagged from side to side. "That's a brownie that comes at night," she said reprovingly.

He looked his surprise. "Is it, indeed—a brownie!"

She nodded. "Granny told me."

She came nearer and placed her little fat hand on his knee. "I like you," she said.

He scarcely breathed and his face, as

he leaned back in the chair, was very still.

She tipped forward and peered into it. "Are you asleep?" she asked. It was almost a whisper—solicitous, but firm.

He shook his head. The tired eyes opened and looked at her, full of a kind of sweet light. "I am—resting," he said.

She nestled a little nearer to him, carelessly, and looked into the fire. Presently she hummed to herself . . . a little crooning song—half words, half happiness. Then she left him and wandered about the room, touching things with grave, respectful touches, but with liveliest curiosity in the peering brown eyes. When she had finished she went toward the door. "I am going, now," she announced.

He dared not put out a finger to stay her and his eyes did not lift themselves from the flames. "Come again," he said carelessly.

"Yes," she replied. It was a very grave little word—full of assurance and comradeship.

Then she opened the door and went out.

The fire flared in the sudden gust and he looked around. The door—too heavy for her to close—swung wide to the October sun, and down the path the sturdy brown figure was trudging, holding intent on its way.

Simeon moved to the door and stood looking after it. The sun shone clear.

. . . Everywhere the serene, level light and in the midst of it, moving steadily on, a quaint, sturdy figure.

. . . He put up his hand impatiently, brushing aside something that hindered his gaze. When he withdrew the hand he looked down at it and thrust it out of sight, perplexed and savage and stirred. . . . "God bless me!" he said, "I'm growing soft!"

He closed the door and went back to the seat by the fire, wondering a little that he should care.

"She will not come," he said, as he looked into the deep coals. But in his heart he knew.

She came again, and again—sometimes every day and sometimes with long intervals between her visits. When this occurred Simeon would grow restless and go often to the window to look where the path emerged from the undergrowth. It never seemed to occur to him to follow the path.

He had showed, from the first, a curious indifference to his surroundings. They had not come by the way of Bridgewater, but had left the train at a small station farther up the road and driven across country eight or ten miles, by night, to the Bardwell farm and the little house on the creek. To Simeon, in the long empty days that followed his arrival, the place had no existence; he hardly knew more than that he ate and slept and that John was always at hand—to turn his pillow or speak to him or replace the light coverlet when it slipped off.

And as strength came to him and they walked every day a little distance from the house, his indifference to the outer world persisted. He asked no questions. His mind followed no roads. Sometimes on misty nights, when the long, slow whistle sounded across the low hills, John would watch him curiously. But the head was not lifted from the brooding hand by the fire. The road had slipped out of memory, perhaps—or grown dim in the visions that haunted his gaze. If he knew where John went on the days when he was absent hours at a time he made no reference to it.

Only when the child came his mind reached out. It reached out to a little path that lost itself in the underbrush and rustling oak leaves. He would stand for hours, looking at it wistfully, when she did not come. But he never set foot in the path. It was hers, and she came and went as she pleased.

With a kind of canny Scotch wisdom the child had refrained from speaking at home of her visits. She may have been uneasily afraid that they would be forbidden if discovered, and she concealed them carefully, not only from her grandparents, but from her little brother who was her only companion.

It was not always easy to run around him, and then there were days when she did not come. But she guarded Simeon's secret jealously, as if he were some helpless thing that she had come upon unawares in her trudgings up and down the farm. And from the day she first strayed into the half-defined path that John's feet had worn between the house and the farm she did not cease to haunt it.

XXIV

"WHAT are you doing?" She was standing on tiptoe, her eyes barely over the edge of the table, watching Simeon's pencil as it moved over the paper.

The pencil continued its curious tracks. Simeon's eyes were fixed on it intently. There was no reply.

She watched it a few minutes in silence. She and Simeon were good friends. They did not mind the silence, but he would answer—if he heard. "What are you doing?" It was very quiet—but firm—in the clear, high voice.

He looked down. Then he smiled into the level eyes. "I'm drawing a map," he said.

She found a chair and pushed it to the table. She climbed into it and knelt with her fat arms folded in front of her on the table, bending toward the paper.

Simeon paid no heed to her. The pencil went its absent-minded way.

It was no unusual thing for them to be silent a long while, with an occasional smile or nod between them, she intent on grave matters, Simeon following hazy, wavering thoughts.

But he had never chosen to make pictures. This was something important and different. She leaned closer, her shoulder touching his. "Is that a pig?" she asked politely. Her finger indicated a shape in one corner.

"That is a mountain," said Simeon. He sketched in a tree or two to verify it.

"It's a funny mountain," she said.

She drew in her breath a little, watching the pencil respectfully.

"It is full of beautiful things," said Simeon.

She bent closer to examine it. "Can you see them?" She lifted serious eyes to his.

"Yes, I see them—very plain. There is iron and copper and lead"—his pencil touched the paper here and there in little dots—"and silver."

"And gold?" said the child in a soft, monotonous voice. They were playing a game.

"Not much gold, I'm afraid," said Simeon, shaking his head, "but it is a wonderful mountain—full of beautiful things that can't get out."

"Why can't they get out?" she demanded, as if some foolish mystery lay behind his talk.

He hesitated a moment. "A bad man keeps them there," he said. "He has the key."

"Won't he *let 'em out*?" It was a shrewd little wondering, groping question toward the truth, but it was full of ringsong happiness.

She nestled closer while the pencil went its way, drawing two long lines that stretched side by side across the paper. They reached the mountain and stopped.

"What is that?" she asked.

"That is a railroad that the bad man will build," he said, putting in some extra lines.

They watched the pencil in silence.

"I know a bad man," she said idly, as if it were not important, but worth mentioning since it concerned Ellen.

"Do you?" The surprise in the tone was partly real. "Do *you* know a bad man?"

"Yes—I know one." It was a modest little drawl, an assertion of wisdom tinged with importance. "He's a *very* bad man," she added.

"No?"

The half-teasing note did not touch her. "He kills folks. He killed my father," she said tersely. The words were light on her tongue, but she nodded to him with deep, serious eyes that he could not fathom. Something in

the eyes hurt him—a kind of trust and ignorance and deep appeal. He put his arm protectingly about the little form, drawing it close.

"You must not say things like that, Ellen."

"Gran'ther says it."

"But *you* must not. . . . You will not say it again?" It was half a command. "Don't ever say it again, Ellen."

"No-o—" It was reassuring and polite—half drawled; and it dismissed the subject idly; they had dwelt on it too long.

"Where is the key?" She was dipping toward the paper, peering close.

"The key?" He stared a little. "Oh—yes. This is the key." His pencil touched the parallel lines.

"That's a railroad," she said promptly.

He smiled. "It is the key, too. See—" He drew more lines rapidly. "When this touches the mountain the iron and silver will come pouring out and it will run down this track—here, and here—" The pencil moved fast.

She followed it with grave eyes. She drew a deep breath and leaned closer to him. She lifted her face with a smile. It had caught the glow in his, but she did not speak.

He fell to sketching again and she nestled in his arms. By-and-bye she put out a short finger. "Does folks live there—or brownies?" she said, half whispering the words.

He looked up absently. "Where? Oh—on the mountain? People live there—I suppose."

"You ever seen them?"

"No," still absently.

She sighed a little. "I like folks," she said.

"What?" He paused in his thought and looked at her with a smile—tolerant and old. "You like folks, do you?" The look teased her.

She nodded gravely. "They'll be glad." Her finger was tapping at the mountain. "They'll *like* to have the beautiful things come *pouring out*—" She spread her hands with the little gesture of beneficent plenty.

He stared at her a minute—then he laughed. "I suppose they will. I hadn't thought of it." His eyes dwelt on her fondly.

"Yes. They'll like it. They're nice folks."

"How do you know? You seen them?" They often played like this.

"I know." She nodded wisely. "There's fahvers and muvvers and little 'uns—bairns—like me." She was looking at something far away. Then her eyes flashed back to his. "They'll like it," she said swiftly. "They'll help. They'll bring out the beautiful things—great handfuls!" She threw them out with her lavish little hands.

He caught them both in one of his. But he was not looking at her. He was seeing something far away . . . something the child's words made him see. . . . He looked at it so long that one of the hands freed itself and reached up to the intent face, stroking it. . . . Then he looked down and saw her. He smiled at her, with deep eyes, with the little shadow playing in them—far back. "So you love folks?" he said slowly.

"We must e'en love everybody," she repeated, as if it were a lesson.

"Everybody?" He looked at her, a little startled at the words.

The clear eyes lifted themselves. "Gran'ther says we must do justice to all men," she said gravely. "But Granny says we must forgi'e 'em—she says we must e'en *love* 'em."

"Then you must love him—the bad man." He said the words half teasingly, half gravely.

Her face clouded. But the eyes were untroubled. "I don't fink *anybody* loves *him*," she said simply. "But Granny says we e'en must." She gave a little sigh.

"So you will?"

"Yes—I love him."

The voice was full of her ignorance—a kind of singsong chant, but somehow it gripped him strangely . . . as if he heard in some inner world faint, ringing little bells of joy and sadness and the mystery of life.

XXV

He sat in front of the fire brooding absently. He had been alone all day—ever since John left in the early morning. The boy was coming back to-night. He had said that he would come—but that Simeon must not wait for him; he must go to bed as usual. It was late now, but Simeon in front of the fire waited impatiently for him. . . . A strange loneliness was on him. Outside the snow had been falling fitfully all day. The ground was covered with still whiteness. Across the waste of snow he heard a distant clock strike softly and far away—eight—nine—ten—and still he waited, brooding there by the fire. He wanted to see someone—to touch a friendly hand—before he fell into the deep sleep that would cut him off. A strange yearning toward his fellow-men had come upon him in the last days. The child's words followed him wistfully. "We must e'en love 'em," he whispered to himself, wondering at the strange tugging at his heart. Tiny cords seemed to reach out from him, threading their way, spreading wide—seeking men and women.

He rose and paced the little room. He was not the man who had entered it ten weeks ago—broken, helpless in weakness. His step on the floor was firm and the hand that reached out to the tongs was steady in its grip. He readjusted a log in the fireplace and replaced the tongs. Then he stood looking down at the fire. He had grown fond of the flames—leaping there. He would miss them when he went back to his office—and the cold town house. He glanced about the little room affectionately. . . . The boy had filled it with love and thoughtfulness from the first day. It was sweet now with pine and spruce and hemlock, fastened everywhere, running along the walls and heaped in corners. The boy had brought it in from the woods for Christmas Day. The scent of it was like the woods themselves; something mysterious and deep was in the room. The woods were in the

room. The man breathed deep and looked around him. . . . How he would miss it all! . . . But his work was waiting . . . and he was ready. He stretched out an arm straight from the shoulder and looked with quiet pride at the hand. It did not quiver, by a breath, from its place. The arm dropped at his side. . . . He was ready—almost. The shadow flickered across his face. It retreated to his eyes and crouched . . . waiting. He sat down before the andirons and looked defiantly into the hot coals. . . . Some senseless, half-crazed words mumbled at him. . . . He shrugged his shoulder. He would not hear them. The firm hand had clinched itself on his knee. . . . A face grew out of the fire, red-eyed and old and imbecile. It swung before his gaze full of hatred and leering malice, and the clinched hand lifted itself. . . . The face was fading, line by line, in the flickering light. The mumbled words grew faint. They sank to a whisper . . . and died away. . . . It was the voice of the child—clear and low: "We must e'en forgi'e 'em."

He sank back, wiping the beads from his forehead. He stared before him—seeking a way out. He had offered the man money. . . . He had given the farm free of rent—and it was a good farm, they said—the Bardwell farm. Was it not enough? . . . He brooded on it, sitting there. The loneliness outside crept into the room. The snow had ceased to fall, and through the uncurtained window he caught a glimpse of light shining. He got up and went to the window and looked out. The white clouds seemed to be being drawn across the sky by unseen hands; beyond them the stars shone clear. The snowy landscape glowed faint beneath them. . . . Suddenly he uttered an exclamation and turned away. He crossed quickly to the door and threw it open and stood peering out.

A little figure was coming up the path, nodding and blowing. Her curls were afloat and her little face glowed in the light from the door.

"I'm coming," she panted heavily, "I've got here."

"I should think you had." His voice was stern. But he had gathered her in his arms, holding her close. She struggled a little and he set her down. "I'm wet," she announced. "I'm 'most wet fru, I guess."

He found some old underclothing of John's and took off the wet things, holding them up, one by one, to the light and looking at her reproachfully. She had come apparently in her night-dress, with the addition of an extra shirt, one stocking, one legging, a pair of overshoes and her little fur coat and cap.

"I couldn't find my fings," she explained, "not all of my fings—in the dark."

"What did you come for?" asked Simeon severely.

Her rosy happiness precluded sentiment—and kindness.

She glanced at the glowing fire and then at his face. She looked down at her pink toes, peeping from below John's drawers. The drawers wrinkled grotesquely on the fat legs and she tried to hold them up a little as she approached him humbly. . . . Simeon was angry—she could see it from the tail of her eye, as she drew nearer with downcast head. "I wanted to see Santa Claus," she said. She had come very close now and she put out a fat hand, resting it on his knee.

He bent a little toward her. "You should have waited till tomorrow, child. Don't you know I shall have to take you back——"

She lifted a stricken face.

"—in the cold and snow?" went on Simeon, unheeding.

Her lip quivered. With a bound she had buried her face in his breast. "Don't take me, Cinnamon!" she wailed. "Please don't take me—back!"

"But your grandfather and grandmother will worry——"

She lifted a reassuring, streaming face. "They don't *know* about me," she sobbed. "I am sound asleep." She snuffed a little and fumbled in the

capacious folds of John's undershirt for a handkerchief.

Simeon produced his and she accepted it meekly. She wiped her cheeks with it and stowed it away. "I peeked," she said, "in the door, and they was asleep—both of 'em—and grand'ther was a-snorin'——"

"Suppose they wake up?" said Simeon.

She looked at him piteously. "Santa Claus can't come to our house," she said. Her lip trembled.

"Why not?"

"He can't get in."

"Oh."

"They've shut up the chimbley."

She moved a fat hand toward the fireplace. "I cried about it," she explained, "and then I went to sleep—I prayed, too, but that didn't do any good," she threw in. "And then I waked up in the dark and 'membered you, and that's how I come." She nestled to him.

His arms were close around her. "You shall stay till the clock strikes twelve—that's when he comes——"

She nodded sagely.

"—and then I'll carry you home."

She sank back, with a little sigh of content. The pink toes cuddled themselves in the warm folds and the moist eyes rested dreamily on the coals.

Simeon, holding her in his arms, had a strange sense of life—its goodness and fulness. The loneliness had fled from the room. It was filled with love, and the world outside was full of friendliness—it held them close.

The child stirred a little. "We didn't hung up my stocking," she said drowsily.

Simeon looked down at the stocking, steaming with faint warmth from the fire. "It's too wet," he said.

She roused herself and sat up. "Don't I have no stocking?" she demanded.

He hesitated. Then he got up and brought one of his own and suspended it from the corner of the shelf.

She surveyed it with dubious content. A little question flitted, and she

raised an anxious, startled face. "He might fink it was yours," she said.

"We'll tell him," said Simeon, "the minute he comes."

"I'll tell him." The eyes had flashed wide. They shone dizzily—the little hands clasped themselves. "I'll tell him," she whispered.

"All right."

She sat very straight, her gaze fixed on the exact spot where he should come. . . . Her shoulders drooped a little, but she caught them at it and shook them sternly. Then the eyes blinked—once—twice, and the brown curls nodded. The watching figure was sinking inch by inch into the great folds that enwrapped it. She lifted a heavy, dreamy face to Simeon's. "I can't keep—awake—Cinnamon," she breathed—very wistful—with little jerks between.

"Never mind, dear." He laid a hand on the bending head. "Go to sleep. I'll wake you the minute he comes."

With a deep sigh the head sank against the strong shoulder. The fire-light played across the little figure in its clumsy garments; it touched the sleeping face and tipped the nodding curls.

Simeon watched it, the world in his heart speaking low.

XXVI

"I've lighted the lantern for ye, Hugh." The rays of the lantern shone on the meek, wrinkled face, bringing out faint lines and lighting up the yellow-white hair that framed it. The hair was a little rough from the pillow. She had not thought to smooth it since—awakened by some inner voice—she had risen to see that all was well with the bairns.

"She's been long gone," she said, looking up to him as he drew on his great mittens and reached for the lantern. "The pillow was cold." The face beneath the wrinkled lines tried hard to hold itself steady.

"You're not to worrit, Ellen. I'll find her. I'll bring her back." He

had thrown open the door and the cold air rushed in.

She shrank a little from it, staring at the dark. "She'll be fey," she said, "wi' the cold and wet and dark. I must have the kettle hot." She turned toward the stove.

He stooped to examine the snow in the light from the door. Then he lifted himself, a look of satisfaction in the grim face. "Shut the door, Ellen," he called; "I'll follow 'em now in the dark."

She came quivering. "Can ye see, Hugh?" She strained her eyes toward him.

"Shut the door," he said. "I can follow—wi' this." He lifted the lantern a little and she saw the old face, stern and hopeful.

She shut the door and watched through the window as the great figure lunged away. The lantern swayed from side to side with the huge strides, as if a drunken man carried it across the wastes. But the lantern went straight; it was making for the oak wood.

The sky overhead was sown thick with stars, flung like a royal canopy above the earth. The shepherds keeping watch over their flocks would have needed no other light to guide them, and Hugh Tomlinson, stooping to the little fat tracks that spudded through the snow, had little need of the lantern that swung from his great hand. The tracks led straight across the country without swerving to left or right. They crossed the wood and came into the open. . . . He followed them fiercely, like a great dog, unheeding whither they might lead. Suddenly, with a muffled cry, he stopped. . . .

Straight before him ran the creek and out from the bank stretched a frail band of ice; beyond, the water swirled black and sluggish. He hurried to the brink and stood staring—not a sound to break the silence. He strained his eyes across the thin edge of ice. Surely it could not have borne the weight of a tiny child. He wheeled about and lifted his eyes to the stars. They twinkled in their places—remote and glad. There was no help in them.

Slowly his eyes dropped. . . . He started—shading them, as if from a vision, peering forward. There in the window of the little house gleamed a light.

He strode forward blindly, his eyes fixed on it. As he drew near to it, he sank to his knees, creeping almost on all fours; but at the window he clutched the sill and raised himself. . . . Within the green-trimmed room with its glinting light and soft glow sat the man and the child—asleep before the fire. The child's head rested against the man's breast and his face drooped till his cheek touched the nodding curls.

For a moment Hugh Tomlinson eyed the sweet scene—like some gaunt wolf at the window. Then he strode to the door and throwing it open entered without knocking.

The man at the fire looked up with startled glance. He had been dreaming and it might have been an apparition of his dream that loomed in, out of the night.

The two men regarded each other.

The gaunt one stepped forward a pace. "Gi'e her to me," he said. "She belongs to me."

"And I thought she was mine," said Simeon. A sad little smile played about his lips. He moved toward the man, holding out his hand. "Forgive me, Tomlinson," he said.

The Scotchman did not touch the outstretched hand. He looked down at it dourly. "Gi'e her to me," he repeated.

Then, as they stood confronting each other, the bells rang. . . . They sounded faint across the snowy waste, striking the hour. The last stroke died upon the air and silence settled within the little room—with greenness everywhere and the scent of firs.

"Peace on earth, good-will toward men," said Simeon in a low voice. "Make it peace for me, Hugh Tomlinson."

"Gi'e her to me," said Tomlinson again.

The man made no reply, but the child reached up a sleepy hand and

slipped it about his neck. "I love Cinnamon," she said drowsily.

Then the Scotchman came nearer. The bony hand did not lift itself from his side and there was no softening of the grim face. "The Lord do unto ye as ye have done unto me and mine, Simeon Tetlow," he said solemnly.

He reached out his arms for the child and the man surrendered her to them—gently, that the sleeping lids might not wake. The old Scotchman gathered her in, close—the folds of his great-coat wrapped protectingly about her. Then, his eyes bent hungrily upon her, without a backward look, he went out into the night.

Simeon Tetlow watched him go, with a quiet smile. His hands had dropped to his sides. . . . Thoughts played across the thin face—gleams of light and humor and gentleness. He lifted his head with a quick glance about the fragrant room. The fire had died down, but a soft light glowed everywhere. He sat down holding out his hands to the faint warmth, the quiet smile still resting on his face and the shadow in the eyes fading before it, flickering away to its place in the night. The eyes shone with swift new light; it played upon the face as it bent to the coals, the intent, human eyes gazing at something there. . . . Slowly the vision lifted itself—shining rails gleamed across the night. They lay upon the land, climbing the slopes with gentle grade. The silvery tracings branched and spread to left and right . . . a white light shone from them—still and clear among the hills. . . . Deeper glowed the heart of it and far and wide the radiance shone. Simeon Tetlow, looking into it with rapt gaze, saw a new world. The curse could not touch him here. . . . It could never touch him again. Something cold and hard in him had snapped at a word. The forgiveness that he had begged of the stern Scotchman had come to him. . . . There had been no curse . . . only the hardness and bitterness in his heart—that would not

say "Forgive." The word had lingered at the door of his lips through weeks of pain and the darkness—wandering rebellion, sick fancies. . . . "Forgive me, Hugh." He had said it—low and humble, unawares, out of the depths . . . and suddenly he had stood erect. "Forgive me, Hugh." He whispered it again, looking into the deep coals. . . . Troops of faces filed before him and he stretched out dumb hands to them. The coals deepened and spread and the great road lay among them. His eyes rested on it wistfully. A still, clear light was on the countryside. . . . Miles of wheat and corn, great tracts of prairie, mountains of ore lighted by it. But his eye swept them as a bird sweeps river and wood and plain in its homing flight. . . . The light was falling on the faces of men and women and children, and the faces were turned to *him*—waiting. The coals had died to a tiny spark. He rose and put on fresh wood and the flames leaped and ran up the green walls. He fell to musing again. . . . The dream held him. Life opened. . . . Softly the bells wereringing in that other world. . . . Little peals that broke and rang, great swinging bells. He bent his head to the sound. It grew, and died away to laughing touch and rang again, clear and fresh. . . . It was nearer now . . . nearer—he turned his head. The sound had stopped—at the very door—the boy had come!

Before he could rise from his place the door had swung open to the freshness of the night and the boy was at his side. . . . "Merry Christmas, sir." He bent swiftly to the lifted smiling face. "You are better," he cried, bending nearer in the flickering light, doubting and eager.

"I am well, John!" He was on his feet, both hands outstretched to the boy.

They stood thus, the fire leaping on their faces, their hands clasped. . . . Then they moved apart, smiling. . . . The man moved his hand toward the dusky, fragrant room. "I am ready to go," he said.

The young face lighted. "We need you, sir. We need you the worst way!"

"At the office?" Simeon motioned to a chair. "Sit down—tell me."

The young man shook his head. "Not tonight." He looked at his watch. "It is after one. You must sleep."

"I shall sleep," said Simeon contentedly.

"And tomorrow we will talk it over," said John.

"Tomorrow we will go," said the man.

XXVII

THE old Scotchman, striding through the snow, was holding the child fiercely to him. She had not stirred since he folded the greatcoat about her and felt the warmth nestling there close to his heart. But the heart beat hot and resentful. Under his breath he swore and muttered as he stumbled through the wood, straying from the path and finding it again with gaunt step. The lantern gripped in his tense hand would have lighted the faint track through the snow. But he did not look down. His eyes were on a light that glimmered and shifted among the trees, shining across the long fields of snow beyond. . . . Ellen was waiting, her heart sore for the bairn. He clasped the little form closer and strode on—bitterness in his heart. . . . Curse him! He had robbed them of work and their good name, and now he would take the child . . . luring her from them through the dark and cold, making her love him. The great arms strained her close as he stumbled on, coming with each uncertain step nearer to the glimmering light till it fell full in his face from the uncurtained window, and he flung open the door and strode in.

She looked up with quick glance. Then a little cry broke from her. "Ye didna' find her!"

He opened the greatcoat where she lay like a flower, and the grandmother came close, bending to the soft vision.

Her hand touched the limp one that hung down, its soft pink palm upturned.

"The little hand!" she whispered like a slow caress. "It's warm, Hugh!" She lifted her eyes to his face.

"Aye—warm." There was no light in the stern face. "Ye best put her in bed." He held her out—a little from him—and the child stirred. Her sleepy eyes opened and smiled to them and closed slowly. The little smile faded to a dream and the lips groped with words and breathed a name softly—"Cin-na-mon—"

The grandmother gave a startled glance. "She is fey!" she said. "'Cin-namon'! What does she mean—'Cin-namon'?"

The old man looked resentful and said nothing.

The sleepy lips shaped themselves again—"Gran-ny." It slipped into a little sigh of content as she nestled into the arms that reached out to her.

The old woman smoothed the tumbled hair and rocked her shoulders gently to the cradling of her arms. "Where was she, Hugh? Where did ye find her?"

"Where she'd no right to be," he said grimly.

"She'd no right but to be in her bed," said the grandmother softly.

"Ye'd best put her there," he responded, looking down at the sleeping flower face with unfathomable eyes.

When she came back she found him sitting by the stove, his gaze fixed gloomily on its black surface, his body bent forward and his great hands swung loosely before him.

She stirred the fire a little and pushed back the kettle on the stove. "We're no needing it, the night," she said, with happy face.

But there was no happiness in the old face across the stove.

"What is it, Hugh?" She was looking at him with keen, gentle eyes that searched his soul.

"Sim Tetlow," he said briefly.

Her hand dropped from the kettle. "Ye've seen him the night!"

"He had the bairn," said Hugh.

"He was holding it—in his arms—like his own." He looked up to her—bitter hatred in the red-rimmed eyes.

But she came close to him, her soft dress making no sound. "He cared for the bairn!" It was half a question—a little cry of disbelief and longing. "He cared for the bairn!"

"He were holding her," said Hugh gruffly. "Same as you—or me." He lifted his hand with a swift gesture. "Curse——"

She caught the hand, holding it to her bosom, forcing it there. "No, Hugh—no." She breathed the words with little gasps. "Ye'll no curse—we maun——"

He turned on her savagely, struggling for a minute to free his hand. Then his eyes dropped. "Ye're a woman," he said grimly. "Ye've no call to know." She stroked the hand with thin, knotted fingers, but her lips made no reply.

He looked up under fierce brows. "I'll do to him as he's done to me." He said the words with deep accent.

"No—no——"

He swept aside the words. "He took away my engine," he said with slow wrath.

"But ye slept, Hugh—and ye could not help the sleeping!" It was a little cry of defense.

"I'd been waking the night and the day—and the night again," he replied fiercely, "and I *slept*. Is sleepin' a crime? She was safe on the sidin'," he added. "There was no harm to her——"

She waited with bent head. So many times they had lived through the steps of his disgrace.

"An' then he gi'e me the switch. He were kind an' just. He gi'e me the *switch* to tend." Impotent bitterness filled the words. "*Me*—that'd drove the best engines on the road! Tendin' a switch—in the freight yard—" His head sank a little.

"Ye was old, Hugh." It was the little cry again.

"An' he will be old!" he broke in with tense, swift gesture. "Old before his time, bent and broke! Oh, Lord,"

he lifted his gaunt face, "gi'e him to me! Gi'e him into *my* hand!" The keen eyes, fixed on something unseen, stared before him. Hope struggled in them—a bitter, disbelieving hope. "Gi'e him into my hands!" he whispered . . . "into my hands!" He bent forward, staring at the vision. Then the face changed subtly. He drew a quick, deep breath. . . . His head had dropped to his breast.

She bent above him. "Hugh!" She called it to the unseeing eyes. "Hugh!"

He drew back a little dazed. The look in the face broke. "Why, Ellen—woman." He put his arm almost tenderly about her. "What frightened ye?" he asked.

"Ye'll not harm him?" she cried. She leaned against him, her anxious, questioning eyes searching his face.

"I'll not harm him," said the man briefly, "except the Lord deliver him into my hand—I have it for a sign."

Her Scotch blood thrilled to the vague menace of the words. She pressed closer to him, her thin hands raised to his coat, grasping it on either side. She looked up into his face. "Hugh, ye must forgi'e—ye must e'en——"

"I must e'en do the Lord's will," he said sternly. He loosed the clinging hands. "Ye must sleep, Ellen," he said more gently.

Her hands had dropped. They hung loose at her sides. But her meek eyes were still on his face. "Ye will forgi'e him," she whispered low, under her breath.

But his face gave no sign that he heard. He put out the lantern and raked together the coals in the stove, covering them carefully with ashes to save the smoldering heat. "Come to bed, Ellen," he said when it was done, "the bairn is safe. Ye can sleep now."

XXVIII

"Who is managing?" said Simeon.

They had finished breakfast and sat with chairs pushed back from the

table. It was the first question he had asked about the road. He had devoted himself to the business of getting well as thoroughly as to any business he had ever undertaken. But he was well now. "Who is managing?" he said quietly.

The young man looked at him with a frank smile. "Nobody is managing," he said. "That's the worst of it. I've been *doing* things—things that *had* to be done—and trying to stave off other people's managing."

Simeon nodded quickly. "That's the best thing could have happened; I hope you've done it."

"Well, not altogether—the men in the office were all right. . . . But the directors fidgeted some—"

"Corbin," said Simeon, "I know."

The young man nodded.

"Oh, I know," said Simeon testily. "And Dickerman, I suppose—yes, yes, I know. Go ahead now. Tell me everything." He leaned forward with elbows on the table—the old alert look in his eyes.

When the recital was finished he stood up, stretching his arms with a gesture of content. "It might be worse," he said.

"You may find it worse than you think," said the young man. "No head to anything."

"Just legs and arms," said Simeon. He laid his hand in passing on the boy's shoulder. "I'd rather have legs and arms—good ones—than any heads I know of—except my own," he added, laughing. "When do we go?"

"I brought down the special last night. She's at Bridgewater."

"Stetson with her? That's good. We start tonight—get there at ten—sleep home—ready for business."

John smiled at the old, quick orders and went out to set them in motion. He looked up to the clear, keen sky with a sudden lightness of heart. A new day had come. Perhaps the tortoise had something of the same feeling when Atlas stooped his shoulder to the world.

By night the little house was stripped of its belongings. Some of them

were packed in bags and boxes and the rest were to be stored in the loft overhead. The boughs of spruce and hemlock and pine had been taken down from the walls and burned in the fireplace during the day. The room was filled with the sweet, pungent odor. At the last minute John had hurried to the woods and brought back an armful of fresh boughs, spruce and pine, hemlock and blue-berried cedar—clustered thick—and trailing green vines. He tossed them lightly into the back of the sleigh and sprang in.

The special was waiting on the siding. They saw the little, flying puffs rise from her and float on the clear air. . . . Stetson was ready—with steam up. They would be off at once.

The baggage-master came forward to help with the bags. He spoke a word in John's ear as he passed him.

The young man glanced quickly toward the engine that puffed and chugged at the head of the little train. He helped Simeon into the car and hurried forward. The man standing by the engine looked at him with troubled eyes.

"He's sick," he said slowly, as John came up. "He was took bad just after he came down." He nodded toward the baggage-room. "He told me to fire up—ready to go ahead. Said you'd know what to do."

The young man turned toward the baggage-room. The engineer, out of a heap of blankets spread across some trunks, regarded him somberly. "I can't do it," he said. "I don't dare. It gripes too hard when it comes. It's easier now, for a minute—but it'll come back." He writhed a little as he spoke.

"You mustn't stay here," said John quickly. He looked about him.

The man put out a hand. "I'm going," said he, "as soon as he starts. I waited for you."

John nodded. "Is there anyone—on the others—?" He motioned toward the yard.

The man shook his head gloomily. "Freights," he said. A kind of subtle

pride underran the words. "I wouldn't trust 'em with her."

The young man lifted his head—a swift thought had crossed his face. "I saw Tomlinson on the street as we drove in. Could he——?"

The man stared at him. "*Old Tomlinson?*" Justice weighed in the tone. "You can ask him," he said grudgingly at last.

"He's all right for it?" questioned John.

The man writhed a little in his place. But justice held. "He's all right if he says so," he answered. His teeth bit at the under lip, holding it firm, and he breathed hard. "He's first-class—Tomlinson. He won't say he can take her unless he's able. You can trust Tomlinson—same as you would me." The pride of brotherhood breathed in the words—lifting them mightily.

"I'll see him," said John.

The hand held him back. "Don't urge him." He gasped a little for breath between the words. "If he says he can do it—let him take her."

"I understand," said John. "I'll send someone for you." He was gone from the room.

As he passed the car he hesitated a minute. Then he sprang up the step and went in. "All ready?" said Simeon, looking up.

"Stetson's sick. Shall we wait over?"

"Wait over? No! Get somebody—get *anybody!*" He threw out the words.

The young man hesitated a minute. He had not mentioned Tomlinson's name to Simeon. Something had always pulled him back when he had thought to do it. "There's a man—" he said slowly—"lives here. He's not running now——"

"Competent?" said Simeon.

"Stetson says so."

"Get him."

Tomlinson, one foot on the sleigh, looked at him under keen, shaggy brows. He glanced toward the station, with its wreathing, drifting lines of smoke. He shook his head. "I'm going home," he said. He threw the

halter into the sleigh and knocked the snow from his boots against the side.

John watched him silently as he climbed in and gathered up the reins in big, mittened hands.

"We need you, Hugh," he said slowly.

The old man nodded—impassive. "Can't go," he said.

"Why not?"

"*She'll* be waiting." He pulled a little on the reins.

"Send someone home with the team. There's Russell. Get him."

The Scotchman glanced with indifferent eye at a man crossing the street. "I've got my chores to do." He pulled again on the reins.

The old horse lifted his head.

John laid a hand on the sleigh. "See here, Hugh. We need you. There's no one else. He told me to get you."

The pull on the reins was checked.

"Who told you?"

"President Tetlow. He's waiting—" He motioned toward the track where the special was blowing off steam. Hugh's eye followed the motion. It dropped to the young man. "*He* told you—Sim Tetlow?" he demanded. "He wants *me!*"

"Yes. He wants you. But not if you're not up to it." He had remembered Stetson's words.

The old man leaned forward; winding the reins slowly around the whip. "I'll take her," he said.

"You're not afraid?" said John. Something in the face disturbed him.

"I'll take her," said Hugh briefly.

"Stetson's jumpers are in the cab," said John, as they came down the platform.

"Too short," said the old man. He was striding with mighty step.

John glanced at him. "That's so. The coat's all right."

"Like enough," said Hugh absently. His face had an absorbed look. The eyes beneath the fur cap gleamed like little points of light. When they reached the engine the light broke and ran over his face. He mounted to the cab and laid his hand on the lever. "I'll take her down, Johnny. Don't

"you worry." He nodded to the young man standing below.

The face cleared. "All right, Hugh. It's the president of the road you're carrying, you know."

"Aye; it's Sim Tetlow—I know," said Hugh. He opened the lever a little.

The young man hurried toward the car.

"All right?" asked Simeon as he came in. The train was in slow motion.

"All right," said John.

Supper was brought in and they ate it leisurely, watching the light change and fade upon the hills and darkness settle down outside. Simeon's eyes came back to the young man's face. "I mean to know this country," he said, "every mile of it."

The young man smiled a little. "Don't you know it now?"

"I don't know anything," said Simeon. "I was born last night—I was born last night," he said, looking at the black window in a reverie. "Who lives along here?" He nodded toward the darkness. "What kind of people?"

John peered out. "Winchendon we just passed, wasn't it? I don't know. I've never been here."

"Ever lived outside of Bridgewater?" said Simeon.

"No, sir."

"Tell me about that."

"About—?" The lifted eyebrows held it.

Simeon nodded. "About anything. Steel works — button shop — everything."

John thought a minute. "You know as much as I do—more. They do a big business."

"What kind of men?" asked Simeon brusquely.

"Men? In the works—you mean?"

"In them—over them—on top—outside, inside," said Simeon. "You know 'em, don't you? Lived with 'em—been to school with 'em—?"

"Oh—if you mean that—!" A smile had come into the puzzled face.

"I mean that," said Simeon. He had lighted a cigar and was watching the tip intently.

The cigar went out and was relighted many times before the story of Bridgewater was finished. The slow mind of the narrator wandered in and out through the past, nudged by keen, quick questions from the nervous listener beside him. Little things loomed large—big things faded and slipped away in John's vision. It had been a mighty day for Bridgewater when the county house was built; but Simeon scoffed at the court-house and listened with rapt face to the story of two truckmen that John knew who had quarreled over their stand and made up, and joined against a third and held up the transportation of Bridgewater for three days.

Simeon sighed a little. "I've never lived," he said slowly. "I've made money—I've sat with my face close to a board, making money, studying moves. I've played a good game." He said it grimly. "But I've never lived yet. My father always said, 'Go in to win,' and there wasn't any mother." He said the words between the puffs. . . . "And then I married—" He waited a minute. "Yes, I guess I lived—a year. But I didn't know—then."

There was silence in the car. The train sped through soft, even darkness. The engine shrieked at a solitary grade crossing and was past.

The man lifted his head. There was a deep smile in his eyes. . . . "It's all going to be different," he said slowly. "Just wait till we get things in hand—I'm going over the road. . . . He drew a map from his pocket and spread it on the table. . . . "Here is a place I want to know." He pointed to a corner of the map. "They're always making a fuss up there—saying the road's got to come their way. The division superintendent says it won't pay. They say it will. I'm going up."

John leaned forward. "Chester County." He spelled the name across the map. "My father knows Chester County."

Simeon looked up with quick stare. . . . "Your father?"

"He lived there when he was a boy."

"I must know him," said Simeon, "I'll take him with me."

John smiled at the picture—but underneath the smile ran a swift sense of his father's presence—its slow, steadying power upon the nervous, hurrying man. He would rest in the stolid strength of it. "I'll bring him to see you," he said.

"Yes. What is your mother like? You have not told me about your mother." He gazed at the boy deeply.

"There's no one like her," said John. "I couldn't tell you. Nobody could tell about mother." His glance had traveled to the rack overhead where the fragrant boughs hung out, filling the air with light fragrance. He saw the light in her face and her hands held out to them. He smiled.

Simeon sighed and moved restlessly. He held another match to the cigar, and his eye, as it followed the steady hand, filled with quick pride.

John was watching the hand, too, and the eyes of the two men met.

"I'm all right!" said Simeon, throwing away the match, with a little laugh.

"You're all right," said John with deeper meaning.

"And I'm a young man." He rose and paced a few steps in the car. "I'm forty-three. You don't call that old?"

The eyes watching him smiled.

"That is not old," said Simeon. He stretched himself to his full height, rapping his chest softly. He threw out his arm—toward the right. "I'm just beginning," he said.

The brakeman passed through the car, carrying something on his arm, a piece of old cloth, a bit of signal flag, thrown carelessly across it.

John's eye followed him to the rear of the car. After a minute he got up and went to the door. He opened it and stepped upon the platform. The brakeman was bending over the end of the car, peering down at something. He tested it once or twice with his hand before he scrambled to his feet. "It's the red," he said, as he saw who stood beside him. "It don't burn right——"

"Yes. What's up?" The train was swirling through the dark and they held to the guard-rail as they faced each other.

In his cab at the other end of the train the old Scotchman, his body braced to the swing of the wheels, leaned out, looking back with tense eyes.

"Can ye see her, Jim?"

The fireman leaned beside him for a moment, piercing the dark with swift, keen glance. "Nothing there," he said.

The train, on the down grade by the river, ran with swift ease through the night. . . . No sight—no sound. . . . Only the great river to the left slipping, dark and still, and the stars overhead.

But the two men leaned back, scenting the dark with swift gaze.

"Nothing there," said the fireman, peering out. "You must 'a'——"

He paused, with quick turn.

A long, low whistle broke the night, echoing against the distant hills.

The eyes of the two men met. Tomlinson's hand raised itself with startled thrust. The answering shriek tore the night. . . . Once—twice—in hoarse demand. . . .

Again the low, seeking call among the hills. . . . Then silence and the black river slipping by.

The fireman sprang to his place.

Tomlinson's hand upon the lever quickened its hold, drawing it tense. "We take no chances," he said. The engine trembled beneath them and leaped to swifter stride. It swayed through the night. The furnace door flew open and the heavens blazed with roar and glow and swift heat. The faces of the two men, lurid in the white glare, confronted each other. Then darkness, and the swift rush of steel on steel—crunching, heavy beats of sound and the thrusting roar and smoke. . . . They were swinging the bend of the curve now, where the road leaves the river under the mountain to track across the country. Tomlinson, his body half thrown from the cab, strained back, his peering eyes searching the

distant curve. He drew his hand across them. "She's there! Jim! Look!" The shaking hand flung the words.

The fireman leaped to his side. A glimmer—a flash—twinkled gleams on the far curve.

"It's her!" muttered Tomlinson.

"Eighty-six," said the fireman.

"The heaviest on the road." Tomlinson's hand reached up . . .

She was running at frightful speed. His quick eye gauged her flight as he sounded the high, shrill call of warning. . . . She had not slowed for the curve. . . . She was not slowing now! Again the whistle sounded its savage cry.

And the note came back, echoing among the hills in little peals that laughed.

Ah, she had heard . . . she knew they were there. . . . They were safe now. The hand on the lever released its grip. . . . Gleason was running her. He was safe. Ten miles more. . . . But Simeon Tetlow, swaying at ease in his parlor-car, need not fear. . . . They were picked men on the road and he ran them hard. They would bring him through. . . .

Once more Tomlinson leaned out, looking back with a grim smile. . . . His startled gaze threw itself. She was *not* slowing. "Jim!" It was hoarse, like a whisper. "Jim! Look!"

But the fireman, bending to his flaming pot, had not heard.

The red eyes blazed again to the night. . . . "Jim!" The hoarse cry shook the night.

The man sprang forward.

"Look!" He flung a hand.

The man leaned out. "God!" he said.

He strained his eyes. . . . "The brakes don't grip," he cried fiercely. . . . "She's running wild!" The words drove with the flying wind. He drew back, lifting a white face. "Down grade," he whispered.

"Aye, down grade," said Tomlinson quietly. "Pile on the coal, Jim!" He flung the throttle wide. A great light broke across his face.

"Pile on the coal, Jim!" The engine sprang. "Stuff her!" he cried.

Again the flare and roar to the night. Great flying sparks . . . glory and fierce heat and the mighty power that throbbed to leap its bounds. . . . Winged thrust—horns and hoofs, and spilling flame. . . .

The old engineer, his hand on the lever, balanced himself to the plunging flight. His small, peering eyes held the track ahead—they laid down the road before the wheels. And somewhere—far within—his soul laughed. . . . In the hollow of his hand he held him—the man who had scorned him—thrust him out. . . . "You shall never touch throttle or brake or switch on this road." The wheels ground out the words. They beat them to powder and flung them—with bitter laugh and roar—upon the night. . . . He would not trust! And now he lay like a baby, swung to the sound of wheels. Tomlinson laughed and set his teeth and leaned forward, squaring his shoulders. . . . His feet gripped the bounding floor. He would carry him safe. . . . They need not fear Tomlinson. . . . Like a baby in its cradle, he swung him to and fro.

Back in the car, Simeon Tetlow, absorbed in his map, looked up absently . . . his glance on the swaying lamps. "They're taking us down pretty fast," he said.

The young man nodded. He was sitting across the table, his head resting on his hand, his eyes, with their quiet light, fixed on Simeon's face. He had not stirred since he came in from the platform ten minutes ago.

Simeon, working on his map, looked up now and then with a little smile, and the quiet eyes smiled back. But something hungry had crept into them—a look of protection and longing—as if they would shield something helpless.

The train, in its heavy swing, lurched a little and Simeon looked up with a scowl that was half a laugh. The pencil had scrawled a curious, zigzag course across the paper. "I don't seem to be running this road," he said; "I might as well give up." He pushed

the map from him and looked at his watch. "Nine-forty. Where are we?"

"Just past Dunlop's crossing," said John. . . . At nine-forty 86 was due at the crossing. The time-table in his pocket told it to him. Five minutes off. Someone had blundered and she was in their block—close behind them—pressing upon them. . . . But the dull face gave no sign.

"Twenty minutes," said Simeon. He stretched his arms with a little yawn. "We'll be in by ten—you think?"

"I think we shall be in before ten," said the boy. His voice was very quiet, but the man looked up and saw the light in the eyes.

He leaned forward. "What is it, John?"

"Nothing, sir." He said the words slowly. "I was only wishing I could do something for you."

"Why, boy—" He turned his head a little, listening. The shrill whistle had sounded. "What's that?"

"Some train at Dunlop's," said John.

The train beneath them seemed gathering itself in mighty leaps.

In the cab the old engineer, with tense body and set teeth, laughed grimly: "I'll bring him in—I'll bring him in!"

The miles leaped behind them, flying. The express pounded heavily—soulless—massive—blind . . . five miles now—three—and the Scotchman laughed with the great lurches in his cab: "I'll bring him through!" . . . Like a child in his cradle, he swung him to and fro.

The lights of the upper station flashed past and he threw the lever swiftly into place. The roar slackened and fell and ceased. The special was gliding easily down to her berth in the terminal shed. The express, under control now, was halting at the upper station. Her blind eye glimmered through the dusk toward the little train that ran, smooth, safe, on its way.

Simeon put away the map in his pocket. He looked out into the busy yard as they drew in—little lights . . . slow-pulling freights—busy engines puffing up and down—smoke and grime.

His own work. His heart leaped to it as he stepped from the car, and he lifted up his face at the great train shed as in some great cathedral one looks up—and waits. . . . Whirling, drifting smoke—soaring and shimmering into the high roof. . . . Bells and voices and the sound of murmured calls . . . crimson torches flaring—skimming along the platforms—diving under engines with hungry, peering eyes. . . . He took it in for a moment with deep, full breath before they swung down the platform.

Beside the engine an old man was bending with flaring torch, thrusting it into the heart of her, searching with careful eye for any harm that had come.

"Oh—Tomlinson!" said John.

The figure straightened itself and wheeled about, torch in hand. . . . His glance fell on the president of the road and he stepped forward, a solemn look in the keen blue eyes, and reached out a gaunt hand. The face, beneath its grime, held a deep, quiet power. "I forgie ye, Simeon Tetlow," he said slowly. "I forgie ye—now."

The president of the road took the grimy hand in his, with firm grip. "It's all right, Tomlinson, all right."

He stood for a moment looking up at the tall figure, covered with oil and dirt, the smoke-stained face full of a kind of dignity. . . . "You brought us down fast, Tomlinson," said the president of the road, with a little smile.

"Aye, I brought ye fast," said Tomlinson. But there was no smile in the words.

He was gazing over their heads at something beyond them.

The express had come to rest in the next berth and the great engine loomed above them, breathing softly, but full of pride and strength.

The three men looked at her for a minute, as if a magnet held them. Then the crowd pouring out of the express bore down upon them and swept them along. Tomlinson climbed back to his place in the cab, watching the two men until they were lost to sight in the jostling, hurrying throng. The

express was a long one and the crowd streamed past . . . pushing, laughing . . . voices called—cramped limbs stretched themselves after the long ride and hurried a little; the platform resounded to light steps.

The engineer of the express leaned from his window, on folded arms, looking down. He was a quiet man with thoughtful eyes and a serious face. . . . The eyes raised themselves and looked across at Tomlinson—above the heads of the happy, hurrying crowd—a straight, slow glance. Then he lifted his hand to him—the sign of the brotherhood—as one who salutes an equal.

And Tomlinson lifted his hand in return.

Simeon emerged from the wicket gate, looking about with happy glance. The popcorn boy, scurrying to his place, the lights flaring and blazing, cabmen shouting—it was beautiful—all of it. He fell into the old, brisk walk and John, hurrying beside him, could hardly keep pace with it. . . . Joy was everywhere tonight—sound and bustle and quick-moving crowd. The nervous, hurrying frame vibrated to the city as a child to its mother's touch, or the heart to music. . . . He was back among his own—exile was done. . . . They pressed upon him—past him—around him. He jostled elbows, and was glad. He could have stretched out his hands to them—every one. The grasp of the old Scotchman's fingers lingered with him still. It crept up his arm in tiny thrills and warmed his heart. He must do something better for old Ben Tomlinson. These was strength in the old man still—with a grip like that! He rubbed his hand and shook his fingers a little ruefully at the very thought of it. How the old fellow had loomed—there on the platform—tall and grim! Then—in a flash—he saw him . . . in the green room, his head lifted high, his face stern . . . the very scent of the room was in the vision, pungent and fresh.

He drew a quick breath and threw

back his head with a little impatient gesture. "I shall never get out of those woods," he said. "I can smell them—yet! I can smell them here. . . ."

The boy glanced at him with swift twinkle. "Look behind you, sir."

Simeon flashed back a quick look. Behind them was the porter, laden with bags and rugs and bundles, and on his great shoulders the green branches swayed and nodded as he moved. They framed the big face with its gleaming smile—like some grotesque, dark-skinned dryad in the smoky station.

Simeon's eye sought the boy's—a little anxiously, it seemed. "Going to trim the office?" he said.

He laughed back. "I'm carrying them home to her," he said.

He called a carriage and the porter stowed away the boxes and bags and rugs, piling the mass of pine and spruce on the seat in front of them till the carriage was filled with its subtle fragrance.

Simeon leaned forward in the half light and plucked a little spray of the cedar, placing it in his coat. "That is for memory," he said, smiling a little, as he buttoned the coat over it; "the rest is for her."

The great office building loomed at the right as they drove, and he glanced out quickly. "Same old place!" he said. His face wore a contented look and his hand reached out, in the dim light, to the stubby one resting on the boy's knee and closed upon it for a moment with firm grasp. "Tomorrow, boy," he said, "we begin again."

"Tomorrow, sir," replied the boy.

He entered the house lightly, but not so lightly that her sensitive ear did not catch the sound and hold itself attent to listen. "John?" Her voice searched the darkness. "John? Is it you?"

He came in swiftly. "Bad mother!" He dropped on his knees beside her and laid his cool cheek to hers. . . . "Bad mother—to lie awake!"

Her hand reached up to stroke his face. . . .

"How fragrant you are—like the woods!"

The fingers strayed a little and touched the feathery sprays and lingered—questioning. "It is the woods! You have brought me the woods!" The little cry of joy trembled in her voice. "I shall sleep now."

He bent and kissed her. "Good night, mother."

"Good night, my son."

In the dusky, fragrant room she fell asleep, like a child, and dreamed she was a child and wandered in a wood and that an angel with shining eyes came to her and walked with her under the green branches, and when he went away she cried to him and he turned and kissed her and said, "I have brought you breakfast, mother."

So she awakened to another day.



PLEASURE

By Venita Seibert

WITH sandaled feet light as the song that hides
 Behind her lips, like mocking-bird beneath
 A rose—crowned with a glowing poppy-wreath,
 Before the king in sinuous dance she glides,
 Flashes upon him eyes where night abides
 And star-fire burns, curving warm gleaming arms,
 Witching him to her side with half-veiled charms
 As some cloud-draped white moon lures on the tides—
 Until at last the king forsakes his throne
 And clasps her in his arms, kissing her lips
 Of rose, and crying eagerly, "Mine own!"
 Ah, bitterness! beneath his finger-tips
 Her beauty shrivels, and a withered hag
 Leers tauntingly through ashes, dust and rag.



THE GRAFT OF DIVORCE

MRS. COBWIGGER—So you think you would be happier if we were in society?
 FREDDIE—I would be at Christmas, ma. I know some boys in the smart set and they all have at least two papas to give them presents.

THE ELOPEMENT

By Edwin L. Sabin

WILLIAM MORGAN ADAMS, his peg-top trousers rolled well up to his ankles, over his low, three-button shoes—thus displaying his fancy hose; his dished felt hat, with fancy band in his high-school frat. colors, grotesquely brimmed (being turned up over one ear, and turned down over the other); his hands in his pockets, whistled a peculiar call as he approached the house, in the gloaming; and promptly Mistress Doretta Marian East opened the front door of said house and tripped out upon the porch.

Doretta wore a white shirt-waist with brown skirt, and a brown ribbon around her throat; and her hair was ruffed above her ears, gathered at the back of her head and held there by two side-combs and a comb in the middle. This was the very latest way the girls had of doing their hair.

Upon the left front of her shirt-waist she wore, also, a Tri-Omega pin. Everybody knew that it was Will Adams's, of course.

"Hello," she greeted frankly, to Will advancing up the walk.

"Lo," he responded, languidly raising his hat an inch and dropping it again—assumed carelessness being the proper thing among his set of high-schoolers. He lounged to the steps.

"Let's sit around on the other porch," proffered Doretta quickly. "The Matthewsons are coming over, and I just hate them."

"Sure," he assented.

"Mama'll call me, I know, but I won't answer. They aren't coming to see me, anyway. And what's the use in trying to be nice to people when

you don't like them? Life's too short," continued Doretta sagely, as they proceeded to the smaller side-porch. "There," she said. "You sit on the settee and I'll sit in the chair."

With a grunt and sigh combined, as of ennui, William sank into the settee, and sprawled, dangling a foot over the end. He flung his dished hat upon the floor.

"I think you boys do wear the prettiest hose," commented Doretta admiringly. "That's a swell pattern, isn't it!"

"Had a fire-sale down at Isaac's; three pair for a quarter. Didn't you hear about it?" volunteered William. "Doggy Bottes and I chipped in and bought three pairs together."

"Oh, the ideal!" giggled Doretta. "How are you going to divide up three pair of stockings, if they're different patterns?"

"Go around on one leg while we're wearing the odd," explained her caller lazily.

"How ridiculous!" scoffed Doretta. "You boys do think of such things! You can smoke if you want," she added shyly.

"Much obliged. Guess I will." He extracted a box of Turkish cigarettes from his coat pocket, and without changing his attitude managed to light a selection therefrom and stuff the box back into the pocket. "Cigarette habit is fierce," he vouchsafed. "Dad says I've got to quit, so now I'm tapering off. Only smoke two boxes a day."

"That's a lot, though, isn't it?" queried Doretta anxiously.

"Should say not! Perkie and Jock

Summers and those fellows smoke twice that. Used to, myself."

"You won't any more, though, will you?" she coaxed. "I think it's horrid to smoke so much. And it's awfully bad for the health."

"Want one?" he asked.

"Of course not! The idea!" she remonstrated. "But I *love* the *smell* of them."

"Heard the latest?" he invited complacently.

"Nol What?"

"The crush that May Leonard and Pete have?"

"Oh, that! I should say yes. Isn't it dreadful? We plague May about him all the time, but she doesn't care. It won't last long, though. She's always crazy over some boy for about a week."

"Pete's folks are going to get an auto; that's what's the matter with her, isn't it?"

"Oh—I don't know. But an auto's pretty fine." She hesitated, and then added defiantly: "Maybe you think that's why I'm going with you. But it isn't; really it isn't."

He flushed, and hitched embarrassedly.

"Uh-uh; I didn't think that."

"Sh!" she cautioned suddenly. "There are the Matthewsons. Now if mama calls me I just won't answer. I don't care. We'll keep quiet and maybe they won't know we're here."

"They'll smell my cigarette," he suggested blankly.

"Throw it away!" she bade in an alarmed whisper.

He dropped the smoldering stub to the porch floor, and crushed it beneath his sole. They sat in silence. Upon the front porch chairs scuffled, "How-de-do's" were exchanged, talk began.

"Doretta!"

The inquiring summons floated through the dusk.

"Didn't I tell you?" whispered Doretta. "But I won't answer. Don't you make a sound."

"Doretta! Oh, Doretta!"

The summons was being repeated.

"She must have gone out; but I'm sure I don't know where," asserted the summoner, apologizing to the newcomers.

The conspirators upon the side porch sniggered.

"Sh!" again cautioned Doretta, shaking her finger—but herself bubbling over.

The conversation upon the front porch was resumed. Under cover of it, the conversation upon the side porch also was resumed.

"Wish I'd brought the auto, and we could have skipped off in it," said William. "But it took on a hot-box or something this afternoon while I was racing Doggy's old car (we were going some, too; that car of his is a corker when it gets started, once) on the Avenue, and had to telephone for a man to come up from the garage downtown and fix it. Dad was mad."

"You'll get arrested, sometime, for racing," declared Doretta.

"Shucks, they just fine a fellow five dollars and costs—seven eighty-five. Doggy and I had our numbers up today."

"I love to race. I could ride in an auto forever, I believe," exclaimed Doretta ecstatically.

"Doretta!"

The former summons sounded. Doretta sat as if frozen.

"I wonder if she heard," she whispered, dismayed, tragic.

The call was not repeated. Doretta ventured to relax.

"Darn mama," she pronounced, agrieved. "I don't see why she keeps calling. She knows I don't want to come. Sometimes I get so sick of home—don't you?"

"You bet. It's a beastly grind. Feel like cutting it and skipping off."

"So do I," announced Doretta confidentially.

"Let's."

"All right. Let's." She met his challenge promptly—as befitted sprightly, up-to-date girlhood.

"Together, I mean," he alleged bluffly.

"Oh!" said Doretta. "W-well—"

but you ought to run off first, and maybe I'd follow," she parried naively.

William was persistent. Having—unexpectedly to himself, even—made the point, he stuck by it.

"No; I mean it. Really I do. Light out together—regularly elope," he continued doggedly. "Would you be afraid?"

"Uh-huh," mused Doretta, wide-eyed 'midst the dusk. "I don't think so."

"And get married, I mean."

"Of course! Do you suppose I'd go if—I didn't?"

"I don't believe they'd care."

"Who?"

"Your folks and mine."

"Mine would," corrected Doretta decisively. "They'd be simply raging. Mama would, anyway. She thinks it's dreadful for a girl to run off."

"Dad might fuss a little," acknowledged William, in turn. "He wants me to go to college. But I tell him what's the use—he'd only be kicking all the time about my marks. Most of the marks I'd get would be remarks!"

"A *la* high school," suggested Doretta.

"You know it!"

Both laughed.

"Really run off, you mean?" queried Doretta curiously; reverting, woman-like, to the subject.

"Sure. After the folks found out it was all over and nothing more doing they'd calm down in time to bless us with the glad hand."

"And get married?" pursued Doretta.

"Didn't we say so? Get married and come back and tell 'em about it. Say! Wouldn't your mother and my dad sit up and take notice!" He chuckled.

"Will! Do you—do you—you know what?" The question came hesitant, appealing, carrying with it a blush, through the glamorous dimness.

"Uh-huh."

"Like me better than any other girl you ever, *ever* met?"

"You bet. You've put the kibosh sign on them all. Don't I act like it?"

"I didn't know. And I like you. I think you're a dandy fellow." The confession was sweet and genuine. "Oh, Will! Won't it be fun! And we won't say a word about it, will we!" Doretta waxed enthusiastic.

"Not till after we get back. We'll let 'em guess for a while."

"But supposing we can't get anybody to marry us!" Doretta's voice was poignantly apprehensive.

"Fudge! We needn't tell how old we are. We can put a piece of paper with a number on it in our shoes and say we're over it. A justice of the peace will marry us, all right, all right."

"Won't folks be surprised, though? The girls will be crazy because I didn't tell them."

"Old Limpy" (thereby being designated the high school instructor in mathematics, an especial fancied aversion) "will throw a fit. He thinks Doggy and I are the limit." He chuckled.

"Doggy will be mad, too, when he hears. You and he are together in everything so," averred Doretta.

William again chuckled. The idea of astonishing Doggy, his crony and his rival in deeds appealed to him. Then he sighed heavily.

"Oh, mud!" he drawled. "I'm dead for another pill. Can I risk it?"

"Go ahead, if you want to. I don't believe they'll smell it," urged Doretta, with ready sympathy for a youth who must have his cigarette.

William gently scratched a match, shielded it in his hands, and lighted his "pill." He puffed and carefully blew the smoke away into the thin air at one side.

"That's two since you've been here," gently chided Doretta.

"I'm only on the second box, though," he defended. "Got another in it to smoke yet."

"How will we go, Will?"

"Tomorrow night, in the auto."

"Oh, Will! Won't that be swell! Can you get it?"

"Sure."

"But I thought your father was angry because you broke it?"

"I'll jolly him up by telling him I've quit coffin-nails. I'll quit 'em tomorrow on purpose. If I jolly enough he and the mater'll give me the auto and take to the street-cars, any old time."

"How mean of you!" The reproof was not without its flattery. "But, Will, where will we go?"

"Just keep on hiking in the machine, as far as we can, and then stop at a farmhouse and get a minister or somebody."

"Won't that be romantic? I just love those stories about automobiles, and a girl and a man—you know. I wish it was moonlight."

"We ought to have Doggy along for best man."

"Oh, Will! I believe I'll tell May. She and Pete might come. She'd be *crazy* to elope. She and I could sit in the back seat and you and Pete in the front seat."

"Naw, they might give us away. We won't let anybody in on it."

"How long will we stay?"

"A couple of days or so."

"And we won't let people know where we are, or anything, and first thing they will find out we'll come sailing back, cool as cucumbers. I'll tell mama I'm going over to May's to stay all night."

"I won't tell my folks anything. I'll take the machine and skiddoo. They'll think I'm in bed till they go to pull me out and there aren't any feet for them to catch hold of."

"Will Adams! How ridiculous! And what do you suppose they'll think when they miss the auto, too?"

"Oh, they'll fuss some. Dad'll ring up the police and call out the reserves to look for Charlie Ross, and the mater'll want the creek dragged."

"My folks will think I'm at school, I expect, until I don't come home at noon." Doretta's tone was disappointed. She appeared to brighten.

"Then they'll begin to worry, though!"

"You might leave a note saying: 'Dear mama and papa, I have went with Willie!'"

"Or 'Gone but not forgotten,'

pinned on the pincushion. But I *would* like to leave *something*—just for fun. Won't they be excited, at school, when they hear we've gone off together?"

"You know it."

"What will we do after we get back?"

"Oh, dad'll give me a job down at the office. We can stay with your folks or mine until we go to house-keeping."

"I know the dearest little flat! Only four rooms! Wouldn't that be cute? Maybe we can get it."

"You bet. Is there a garage?"

"I don't know. But I should think there would be. It's an awfully swell location—on Forty-ninth and Ash. Sue Mumms and her husband live there, that's how I know about it."

"Wonder how much it would cost us—the two of us."

"The flat?"

"No, everything."

"Not *very* much. Mr. Mumms only gets a hundred dollars."

"A month?"

"A month—or a week. I don't know which. But, anyway, it's a hundred dollars, because Sue told me. And they go to the theatre, and do *everything*!"

"So will we. Dad'll hand me a good job. He'll have to."

"Oh, Will! Maybe he'll give you the auto! Wouldn't that be fine?"

"Naw, I'd rather have a new one. A six-cylinder touring-car is what we'll strike for. That's the newest thing. About sixty horse-power. See?"

"All right. Do you like lobster patties, Will?"

"Yum!"

"I can make them. And some night we'll have all the frat. boys in. And we'll have the girls, too."

"Sure. Say, what time will you be ready about?"

"Tomorrow night? Oh—after dinner. You can come around here, and pretend you're taking me over to May's."

"Great brain-work, eh?"

"Won't it be grand to be done with

old school? But your father'll be mad at you for not finishing. My mother'll be mad, too."

"Fudge! We're nearly through, anyway. What's the dif? I'm liable to be plucked. I'd been plucked before if I hadn't played football."

"Perhaps they'll give us our diplomas, we're so near through now," Doretta hazarded hopefully. "After they find out we're married, I mean."

"They can keep mine. I don't want it," William asserted with lofty gruffness.

"Doretta!"

The door leading upon the side porch had opened, and Mrs. East, Doretta's mother, was sternly speaking.

"Doretta! Have you been here all the time? I've been calling you. Good evening, William."

William scrambled to his feet, and snipped his cigarette away into the darkness.

"Mr. and Mrs. Matthewson are here, Doretta. I've called you two or three times. Why didn't you answer?"

"Now, mama!" pouted Doretta in protest. She shook her head, signifying her unwilling attitude.

"Will you excuse Doretta, William? We have other company, on the front porch. Or will you come, too?"

William stammered, declining; alleging an engagement down the street, a promise to be home early, and that his call was informal and finished, anyway.

"Very well," said Mrs. East. "Don't delay, now, Doretta," and she retired—however, leaving the door open behind her.

"Where's my lid?" mumbled William. He found it. "Well, s'long. See you later."

"Of course. I'm sorry."

"No matter. Don't mind a lemon once in a while myself."

Doretta followed her mother. William cut across the lawn, upon the front walk dexterously lighted a cigarette, and indifferently loitered on.

The telephone in the East hallway rang peremptorily.

"It's for you, Miss Doretta," called the maid.

Doretta descended the stairs and took the receiver.

"Hello?"

"This you, Ret?"

"Rather think so."

"Say—you know that deal we have on for this eve?"

"Why—yes."

"Well, it's off, at this end."

"Why?"

"Dad's hooked onto the auto, for his own push. And, say."

"What?"

"He fussed at me good and proper after I got in last night. Was sitting up for me. What do you think of that! I've got to do the graduating act at high school, and then I've got to go to college—Yale or Harvard or some bally place. Want a photo of my finish?"

"Tintype, huh? Will!"

"What?"

"Listen."

"You say it."

"I couldn't—you know what—either. Mama promised Mrs. Matthewson I'd help serve at her party, and I'm dressing now."

"Oh, good enough. Well, see you later—unless you see me sooner."

"All right. Good-bye."

"Good-bye."



A COMMON EXPERIENCE

MERRITT—Which of your New Year resolutions did you find it hardest to keep?

CORA—My diary.

MONSIEUR PATRIQUE

By Maude L. Radford

MY cousin preceded me up the waxed stairs, holding her dainty skirts with both hands, quite as if she had been born a Frenchwoman.

"I do hope he'll receive me," she breathed back to me; "you know, if he can't summon the creative mood for you, you simply *can't* have your gown. I nearly always inspire him at once myself, but there are some women in Paris—my dear, he's ruined their reputation for *esprit*. If Monsieur Patrique won't make a gown for them, or can't, then they've no souls."

We were ushered into a semicircular room, all white paint and gilding and long mirrors and rose draperies. Half-a-dozen perfectly dressed women sat chatting together, their eyes occasionally wandering to the door opposite which we had entered. A young girl in dark uniform stood there, her head poised backward in a listening attitude.

Annette bowed, and exchanged a word or two with the rest.

"You'll meet them all some time," she murmured. "Just now they hardly know their own names, they are so tense waiting to see if Monsieur Patrique will receive them. Do you see how horribly nervous some of them are? Two of them duchesses, too."

The listening maid opened the white door, and was spoken to from within while we all drew long breaths. Then she took a pace forward and said:

"Monsieur will receive Madame the Marquise de Bréville."

Annette rose, whispering.

"It's just like him, but they'll take it out on me. Oh, dear!"

We passed behind the white door, and found ourselves in a little room all delicate subtle greens that suggested some kind of sublimated forest. Annette's pretty face paled a trifle.

"Suppose he *shouldn't* have the idea?" she breathed.

A door at the side opened, and a stout, dark woman with quick, watchful eyes entered, and impressively held open the door for Monsieur Patrique.

And then I knew where his name came from, for, despite his Gallic dress, bow and air in general, he was Irish. The dark red hair waving in delicate irregularities all over his head and the gray, mystic eyes told me that he was from the land of the poets. His perfect French would not have betrayed him.

He rushed to Annette, stretching out his long, slender hands.

"Ah, madame, but it has come!" he cried. "But I was in despair—despair! 'What will happen, then?' I said, 'for the season goes on, and madame's dress is not born!' So in the night when I could not sleep I got up and wandered from our house into the woods of Clamart. Ah, madame, but God made those woods for me! It is there that my best visions come, and I can give beauty to Paris. Has it chanced, Madame la Marquise, that you were ever in the woods when dark was melting? Ah, yes; in your wonderful Irish woods. But God does not use them for beauty so much as He uses them for sorrow. But in the woods of Clamart!—one finds some nook at the foot of a tree—not too contracted, madame, for the soul must have room to widen as the dawn comes. And then, madame——"

His hands fell and his voice grew dreamy.

"First, there is a little sighing stir among the trees—Night rustling her long draperies, preparing to rise. Then a little bird sings a note of warning, and another, and another—so sweet and tender one cannot decide whether it is the voice of birds or of babies. And then in the east, as if a dark veil were stripped away, a gray light comes—such a soft, gentle herald, madame! Then, like a caress it is the dawn—pink and trembling, and then crimson and glorious. And all the greens about one! And so, madame, the creation came to me—yours. I saw you in a gown that will suggest the Spring. There will be the shimmer of green, and as you walk it will turn to dull gold. There will be a hint—a smile of pink; apple-blossoms and snows together, I shall suggest. And madame's own face and hair will tell of the riches of Summer. Ah, but it will be my masterpiece, the glory of my life, and while you wear it, madame, I shall be crowned as a king."

I felt as if he had been chanting lyric poetry, and as for Annette, her little hands were clasped and her blue eyes were stars.

"It is beautiful, beautiful, Monsieur Patrique," she said.

Monsieur Patrique leaned dreamily against the door, and the short, dark woman fixed an anxious look on him.

"You had better withdraw, is it not?" she asked gently.

Annette glanced at me significantly.

"Wait a moment," she said; "the cost, you know."

Monsieur Patrique stiffened; his pale, beautiful face grew distressed and fretful; he put a hand on his hair, and said, almost hoarsely:

"Madame la Marquise, you have awakened me. It was a dream. As to the money—I do not know——"

"You had better withdraw, is it not?" repeated the dark woman.

When she had closed the door on him she turned to Annette, and said with a kind of cold anger:

"Madame la Marquise knows very

well that Monsieur Patrique has nothing to do with the money. It is very unfortunate. I am afraid Monsieur Patrique is upset for the day, and there are others—all the ladies in the salon. Did not madame remember that the thought of money is the ruin of monsieur's art? It is very unfortunate. I, it is I who attend to that. Madame has been very thoughtless, is it not? I will go to him. Monsieur Patrique wished to show some draperies to madame which he sent for this morning. Madame may wait in the large room with the show-cases until they come—that is, on the chance that monsieur is fit to see her again. I do not know. It is very unfortunate. The price of the gown will not be less than three thousand francs—perhaps much more. I will see how monsieur is."

"I am very sorry," murmured Annette contritely.

Madame Patrique had her intuitions, for she said with reproach as she opened the door for us:

"Madame might have related to mademoiselle without showing. The effect would have been the same."

Annette blushed scarlet.

"Let—let us go to the large room with the show-cases," she said humbly.

"Annette," I remarked, "I am a thorough democrat, but I must say that for a marquise you are—well, showing exemplary patience with this tradesperson."

"You'd have to be a Parisienne to understand," said Annette. "The Patriques are the vogue here. They are unique. Any woman here will take anything from them if only she has her gowns. He's so wonderful. And then, I quite deserved what she said, you know. I was making a dramatic spectacle out of him for you. Dear me, I'm upset, too. I don't want to look at the show-cases."

She moved toward a little window-nook commanding the Place de l'Opéra. After we sat in silence for a moment I said:

"You promised to tell me his story."

"I'll tell it to you," said Annette.

"I feel less like a naughty child now, and we may as well make ourselves comfortable. It will be an hour before we are called. I'm really quite fond of these people, and I know all about them. Despite the fact that madame was so forbidding this morning, she has wept before me. Don't worry, my dear; they won't give me up as they did the duchess."

"So there's a duchess?"

"Yes," said Annette, "but not just at the beginning. You see, Pat Clancy used to take care of me when I was a youngster over in Wicklow; his mother was my nurse. All that I remember of Pat in those days was that he used to lie on the fairy raths, and the Good Little People would come and whisper dreams in his ears, and he would tell us all he saw—such great heroes and wonderful ladies! And how he would tell us about their dresses and jewels! The colors were like rich fruit. Even as a child I felt the beauty of his inner vision, no matter how his speech halted.

"Well, when I went away to school Pat Clancy dropped out of my life. It seems that in some way he got to Birmingham and learned the tailor's trade. Fancy a beauty-loving Celt in Birmingham! In some way, I don't know how, he got to Paris, and they say that the language simply rippled from his tongue like the Gaelic. All this by the time he was twenty-three or -four. Meantime, my marquis had seen me at my convent and had married me. At the wedding he met our third cousin, Florence Grant-Colfax, and detested her. Don't open your eyes; you don't know Florence as she was. She wanted dreadfully to visit us here in Paris, and Henri simply would not let me invite her. Then she and her mother came here and took a little apartment, and I simply *made* Henri let me do some decent things for them. Florence came with me one day when I was ordering some new gowns—the first I had ever bought for myself. We went to François, and who was his chief assistant but Patrique. No longer wool-gathering,

gawky Pat, as they called him at home, but the graceful, poetic Monsieur Patrique, the mainspring of the house of François.

"Though I don't like Florence, I can't help admiring her. She is one of the great beauties of Paris. That wonderful hair of hers—Patrique said to me once it was like beechwood darkened by a mist of rain; just that deep red, you know, not unlike his own. Her complexion—well, Irish; her eyes the blue-black, and her lips the deep red that you see in all pictures of the Grant-Colfaxes. You've hardly met her since you were a child, and I think you will be surprised at her beauty.

"At this time, my dear, I confess I was by no means *savante*; just a milk-and-water, rose-and-snow young bride. Patrique has brought me out since. So I was as nothing beside Florence. After our mutual recognitions he had eyes only for her. Now of course I had given Florence all I thought the marquis would approve of—several new gowns and things—but of course I had ten times as much as she had. I am afraid I was selfish, for as I chose my clothes I forgot that it might hurt Florence to have so little when I had so much. But then, and when she came with me to fittings, Patrique must have observed it all. At any rate, one afternoon he called to see me.

"My dear, it was the most embarrassing half-hour I have ever passed, and though Patrique was the one who should have felt guilty, it was I who had the hang-dog aspect. It seemed that the extraordinary young man wished Florence to be launched on a successful social career in Paris. Of course he put it delicately, but that was his idea; he wanted her to make a brilliant marriage, and all without a *dot*. He realized the difficulties and the cost, but he would finance it. Fancy, the dear chivalrous thing! He was going to set up for himself; her beauty had inspired him to it, he said. He never would have thought of it, would have stuck to François forever, if he had not felt the yearning to dress the exquisite creature without inter-

ference. . . He would supply the money and the gowns, but he wanted me to pretend to do it so as to save Florence's pride.

"He was so glowing and earnest that I hated to refuse. But the marquis—my dear, if you were married, you would know that there are some things a woman simply *can't* have her own way about if they have to be done above-board, and of course this would have to be above-board, or Henri would have found me out. I did hate to say no; indeed, if I could I should have gladly looked after Florence myself, if that kind of marrying conquest was what she wanted, only—the marquis!

"I might have spared myself hours of regret. How Patrique broached the matter to Florence I don't know, but I do know that in a week he was set up in his own shop, and that in a month Florence and her costumes were the talk of Paris. A few days after I received his card of announcement I went to his shop—just two rooms then. Mademoiselle Véronique received me—a plump, dark young woman from the corps of François, who had elected to take pot-luck in Patrique's establishment. She was bookkeeper, door-warder—everything. She received me with exceptional pleasure; I fancy that no other customers had come but Florence and me.

"Monsieur Patrique was engaged, it seemed. I was standing behind the curtains looking out of the windows, when Florence came from the inner room. I heard the inner door close, and then Véronique's deferential voice:

"Mademoiselle, if you please; will mademoiselle sign this paper?"

"Sign the paper? What paper?" asked Florence, in a puzzled tone.

"Just a little paper—an agreement that later on when mademoiselle is in a position, mademoiselle will pay——"

"I could fairly feel Florence blushing. Then she said in a constrained voice:

"Monsieur Patrique said nothing of an agreement. I had thought it was an oral arrangement, and not to go beyond him and me. But if he insists——"

"It is nothing, mademoiselle, nothing, and I am a machine with no eyes, no ears," said Véronique softly.

"I heard a pen scratching, and then Florence said:

"Nevertheless, I think Monsieur Patrique might have arranged this little matter just with me, and I shall tell him so.

"I heard Véronique give a little gasp while Florence switched across the floor to the inner room. Presently there sounded an angry exclamation, and Monsieur Patrique shot into the room, exploding in angry French.

"Véronique! how did you dare! What impertinence! The paper!" I heard him tear it across and throw it into the waste-basket. 'Mademoiselle, you will forgive? She must have divined—and she is a very good business woman. But between you and me, mademoiselle, my inspiration to beauty—this, this is impossible. You will forgive? I, I shall toil all night that mademoiselle shall have the dinner-gown. But now—now I am upset. I must go out alone with the sky and the woods, or I cannot—the dress will go——'

"He set off without his hat, and I judge that the good Véronique ran after him with it. When she came back, breathless, Florence had gone, and I still stood looking out of the window—but with the curtain drawn back.

"Oh, I had forgotten madame," puffed Véronique.

"Madame will forget, too," I assured her. 'Good-bye, Véronique; I wish you good fortune.

"I do not comprehend, but I thank madame," murmured Véronique.

"Well, my dear, you do not understand the various complications of married life, but I may say in passing that Florence's success was rather difficult for me. Perhaps the marquis might never have wondered why I was not the rage, except for the fact that my cousin was, and he did wonder. Fortunately, I wasn't stupid, even then. I didn't try to be the rage; I knew I couldn't be. But I vowed

there and then that the day should come when I would be the inspiration of Monsieur Patrique, and that the concrete results of that inspiration should make me a centre of our world. In the meantime I expressed a distaste for the world, I wanted just to be with him for the first year or two, I said, and I somehow conveyed to him that when I did burst forth it would be a burst indeed, due to the lovely, quiet months with him. Well—I made him happy, but it cost me something. Life isn't so simple as it was on the estate at home when all the clothes I had in five years wouldn't cost so much as one gown does now.

"But I was talking of Florence's vogue, wasn't I? In my ten years of Paris I've never seen anything like it. You see, she had the kind of figure Paris loves—slim, but deep-chested. She walked like a goddess, and there was always a radiance in her hair and her eyes. She was clever, too; she was as witty as an Irish-woman is expected to be, and yet she had plenty of the *jeune fille* air which she could summon when it was remembered that she was by no means married. I did so admire her! People were wondering about her; where she got her money how clever her mother must be, what the campaign was, in fine, and she walked through it all serene and unconscious—absolutely convincing.

"She went everywhere. Not at the very first in the beginning I know I had to strain a point to get her one or two rather special invitations and I've found out since that Patrique actually *gave* a dress to a stingy and exclusive old princess so that Florence could have a card to her 'at homes.' But in the end she went everywhere in Paris and, when the season was over, to Normandy and wherever else the races were all Summer long.

"And Monsieur Patrique, the power behind the throne—how the man toiled for her! You see, the season was pretty well started and people had got their clothes before it was learned who was her dressmaker. And by

that time the man was wild as a Con-nemara goose. His business was going to pieces, he turned women away, right and left; he insulted poor Véronique when she protested; he thought only of Florence. I believe she was the passion of his life, the obsession. He saw in her beauty personified. I cannot tell you what follies the poor man committed. He would stand in the streets waiting to see her drive by—just a glimpse, you know; he would post himself in front of houses, just to see her walk out in one of his beautiful dreams. He followed her from place to place after the races began, while poor Véronique went into hopeless debt to get the money for the rent of their shop.

"But you will be wondering what finally happened in Florence's campaign. At first, of course only honor and glory; then, from the horde of men about her, just a few who seemed to have definite intentions. Of these some didn't count, naturally. Of the few who did—well, you know how wary Frenchmen are, they have to be. They wanted to know how much she had, and I must say Florence was always sincere with them. When it came to the point she showed that she had nothing. They loved, but they just *had* to ride away—all but the Duc de Crêce.

"He was a great catch; he could afford to overlook a *dot*. And by the end of the Summer Florence had grown so tense about it that people could see that it was—well, frankly, a chase. She *had* to win out, you see. And while everyone would applaud her if she succeeded, she knew that they would laugh at her if she didn't. The *jeune fille* wore thin in those days, I can tell you.

"The duke was well toward fifty, and the one passion he had kept fresh was his love for beauty. And there Florence with her face, and her various moods, and her gowns, and the subtle harmonies among them, held him. But would he be held forever?

"In the Autumn poor Monsieur

Patrique was back, without credit, haggard and thin; and Florence was haggard in soul, though her face was as fresh as ever. She has always been shy of me because I was present at one of the final scenes between them. I had gone to order a gown, and Véronique had received me with angry and despairing face.

"But it is of a madness!" she cried. "If he does take your order, madame, you will have to give me the money beforehand, and I must steal out and buy the materials—and then he would use them for her. But he will not make the costume for you. He is mad, and she—she is in there trying to get but one more gown, and he cannot, he cannot!"

"The door opened, and Florence swept out, cold and angry, while Monsieur Patrique followed, protesting.

"I cannot; have pity, for I cannot. There is no blood in a stone, and I do not know how to steal. And those bills—they take away my dreams."

"He sank in a chair, and clutched at his irregular, waving hair.

"Véronique cast upon him a look of exasperated affection. Then a cat-like gleam came in her eyes, and she hurried after Florence, and called piercingly:

"Mademoiselle, wear one of the old gowns for the duke, and tell him you wear it because you had it on when you first met him; *hein?*"

"Tremendous cheek, wasn't it? But do you know, I sometimes wonder if Florence didn't do something of the kind. It would flatter a man to show him that you were making him so intimate a part of your memories as all that—if it were done at the right moment. At any rate, Florence *did* bring the affair off, and the engagement was announced, and her mother went to bed with nervous prostration, and all Paris sat back and applauded. But I think it was a close shave.

"No, I'm not at the end yet. Poor Monsieur Patrique hadn't a sou. Véronique was expecting that they would be turned out of the shop any minute, but was staving it off with an order or two I managed to get for her

—orders she herself executed; there wasn't a bit of charm in them. But he wasn't fit to use his head.

"The nasty part of the story comes now. The duke was really in love with Florence, and he gave her money for the trousseau. Her mother told me, and I hurried with the news to Véronique to cheer them up. And Véronique sent Patrique off to the woods of Clamart, and made out a sheaf of bills, and carried them herself to Florence. The lady was 'not at home,' if you please. She sent no reply to the bills, and the next thing we heard François was making the trousseau.

"Something her mother said to me in all innocence gave me the clue. François was making the clothes for nothing, just to get the patronage her name would bring him. And the duke's money she was settling on her mother. Of course she should be good to one's relatives, but not precisely in that fashion. I told Véronique; not that I supposed she could do anything, but I wanted to give her whatever chance there might be. I never saw a fat person go through such contortions as Véronique did. And—oh, dear, I'm spoiling the climax, but I can't help it. It seems that she had saved the agreement which she had made out, and which Florence had signed, and which Patrique had torn. She had neatly pasted it together, and she went with it to Florence, and sent up such a message as got her instant admission—and caused the dismissal of the maid who carried it, by the way.

"Had that been printed, as Véronique threatened, or shown the duke (I assure you it was quaintly worded), or brought to court, Florence would have been lost. Véronique came back with every sou. And then, such a paying of debts! She had the receipted bills Patrique owed piled in heaps in front of him; she had the wholesalers bowing before him and beseeching his patronage; she had heaps of paper money and gold ostentatiously piled on her desk. Though his is a nature that shuns the practical, I must say that Monsieur Patrique was

restored by this obvious means. I mustn't forget that she began the first of the intricate arrangements by which a marriage is settled in France, and then she sent him off to a cottage in the woods of Clamart to fill his mind with visions while she got the shop in order and solicited patronage. I might add that at her suggestion, and with a little unsuspecting help from the marquis, who is occasionally a lover of nature, I spent a few hours in the woods roaming about and seeing something of Patrique. After all, he was Pat Clancy, my big foster-brother. But he was not—he was the poor, disturbed poet with empty eyes. I did my best to fill the void Florence had left, and—well, the marquis was very, very happy with my vogue for the rest of the season."

Annette looked smilingly down at the gay golden Place de l'Opéra, and added:

"Heigho! Here is madame with an amiable face."

"Come, Madame la Marquise," said the stout Véronique with great softness, "monsieur is ready for you now. Ah, *mon Dieu*, such draperies as he has!"

She led us through the long show-room, and through the outer salon whence most of the ladies had vanished. As we were passing on to the inner room where Monsieur Patrique was awaiting us, a servant in magnificent livery handed madame a letter. She glanced at the crest, and then said very piercingly:

"Say to Madame la Duchesse de Crêce that Monsieur Patrique regrets that he can take no more orders. Monsieur regrets, if you please."

Annette nudged me amusedly.

"*Wouldn't* you think she'd be ashamed to try it?" she whispered.

"But she's gone down so since he stopped bringing her out. Oh, Monsieur Patrique! Oh, *oh!*"

And "Oh" expressed it. I do not know how Monsieur Patrique had made his magic. But in that faint forest room the model who was draped in the shimmering chiffons and delicate laces that were to be Annette's did suggest all the sweetness and prophecies of Spring. No one spoke for a few moments as the girl paced slowly back and forth, but I am sure we must all have thought of innocent and lovely things, of gentle promises and soft regrets.

"Madame will see the deep tone of green," said Monsieur Patrique in a low tone. "it is somber, yes, but madame will remember that there is no beauty without sadness that there is a poignancy in any sweetness, that there is no rose without the thought of the rain, and no lily whose own richness does not weigh it with languor. Is it not? Those who know madame's soul will understand this creation. Madame could not have worn this five years ago, it would not have been madame. But the soul of madame has soared, and now madame is worthy of this. It was born in the dawn, madame, you will carry the life of the Spring with you when you wear it, and you will pour beauty into the souls of the beholders—beauty with a little sad smile, forgotten as soon as born. *Eh bien*, madame, you are one now, you and the dawn and the woods of Clamart."



LIKE ALL WOMEN

"IS your wife of the same opinion still?"

"She is of the same opinion, but not still."

THE CYNIC

By Mrs. Henry Dudeney

DR. ELLERTON came out of his sedate Georgian house in the middle of the village street—the house where he lived alone.

It was a morning in late March, and in passing the briar-bush which grew somewhere between the porticoed door and the dignified gate he got a whiff of cool apple smell. It was flung in his face and he caught it—one of those delicious, emotional moments of the country year. He had them all mentally docketed, these occasions when a sound or a sight or a smell, all fleeting, will swing a man high up to some momentary heaven. His eyes instantly grew happy—and restless. He wished to stream out into the wide world—to be quite free; to lose everything and everyone, including himself. He could not endure to be—the village doctor—just that! To be getting bald, to be a confirmed bachelor—and to be forty-five one's very next birthday. It was all an amazing farce. He was flushed with the fervor of the ideal temperament.

He stood sniffing briar-bush and looking at rings of white and purple crocuses in the round rose-beds and listening to a thrush who was distracted for love that morning. Spring was actually back. Spring! The one mistress of whom men and birds do not tire. Dr. Ellerton had never been in love; yet he could fully sympathize with the thrush—and envy him, this speckled, musical adorer.

Then, dolefully remembering his patients and the dim green light cast by sick-rooms, he opened his gate, stepped into the village street and—almost—into the arms of Miss Rose Larkin; she

was the youngest Miss Larkin but one.

"Ah, good morning," he said, speaking fast and looking nervously about him for some way of escape. "I've just been drunk—on poetic cider. Step into my garden and sniff the briar-bush; you'd swear yourself in an apple-loft."

"Drunk! What a curious term!" said his neighbor, remaining stolid and gazing from the bush to him with benevolent disapproval.

He was going off—laughing and well satisfied. He loved to shock these worthy, exasperating ladies of the village. But she called him back and remarked solemnly:

"The new tenant of the Malt House moved in ten days ago and was at church on Sunday. We called, of course. Her name is Ackerman—Miss Kathleen Ackerman. We heard at first that she was a widow, but that was fortunately a mistake. We don't want widows in the village; they are so—so unreliable."

"We certainly don't want an Ackerman. It sounds sour."

"But it is surely what we are that matters and not what we sound, Dr. Ellerton."

Miss Rose Larkin was supposed to be intellectual, and had a distinct turn for what she called moral psychology.

"I agree with you," he said seriously, "that we don't always look what we sound."

He went off, walking fast and chuckling and swinging a little cane he carried, and saying to himself, as he recalled his neighbor's faulty complexion:

"She looks like a wax doll who

has incontinently sat too long in the sun."

It was a wonder that he did not say this to Miss Larkin; he had a terrible habit of thinking aloud.

She watched him go down street and over the white wooden bridge that spanned the brook—a wayward little brook that twisted through the village and tripped you up, so to say; and went bubbling over big stones, laughing because it had made a fool of you.

She watched until Miss Jones came up and caught her, when she explained confusedly:

"I've just been talking to Dr. Ellerton. How cynical he is!"

When the ladies of the village said cynical they meant celibate—although the terms are not interchangeable. They had called him many things—eccentric, decadent, neurotic; but cynical remained and became his badge.

The doctor walked on; he could not get the smell of sweetbriar out of his tipsy nose. Never had he been less in the mood for sick-beds. He never was in the mood for the things he had to do—and yet he did them cheerfully: this is the stuff of a hero. Fate had elected to make a mere puzzle game of him—twisting and turning him in every way but the right one. He had been, so his neighbors admitted, a devoted son and a good brother—but he had not enjoyed himself with these virtues, he had merely been in resigned thrall to them. His heart, that demanded a whirlwind, had been given over to calm, domestic loves—a peevish, genteel mother, an invalid sister who at thirty-five had scandalized the village by getting married and going with her husband to India. This closed the doctor's epoch of affectionate nagging. The worst of his poor mother and sister had been that they had wished him well.

"To wish me well is to bottle my volatile essence," he used to say—and would, in moments of rare irritation, add something about the blighting effect of blood relations. He was glad, now that both were gone, God bless them! that he had not said it often

—or really meant it once; and he could only trust that they had believed him—never!

His heart was a house—half opened; it was a large place, full of shuttered state rooms. This tender, spacious heart! His mother and his sister, petulant, selfish women, had occupied its merely useful quarters—and never guessed at any others. There had not come a woman yet—with a key—to fling open the state rooms and make home of them and fill them with unbridled laughter and brimming joy—the mood that prevails when two truly love and are mated.

It seemed to him as he walked through the village that he was the only conscious slave in the place. Freedom sung on every bough.

"It's true, nevertheless," he remarked to the parson's dog, who was tied to a post and snoring in full sunlight, "that unconscious slavery represents the ideal."

And then he called across to a man over the way:

"What lovely weather! Close in your ear," as his neighbor came up—"the village may dose itself today, for all I care."

"It's extremely bad weather for the digestion," said the neighbor, looking annoyed—Dr. Ellerton always annoyed him. "Only last week we had snow, and today it might be June instead of March."

"Why don't you go to other climates? There are plenty," the doctor's eyes lighted. "Wish I was a ship's surgeon again! I was the sort of fellow, you know, who'd look far out to sea, not stick in the cabin. How the sea must twinkle and smell salt on a day like this!"

"Being a ship's surgeon was the downright ruin of you," returned the neighbor, with a sort of blunt fondness—the way one would talk to a child or a fool that one wished to propitiate. "It unsettled you, spoilt you for your profession. By the way, you'll have a new patient at the Malt House. Down in the country for her nerves, this Miss Ackerman, so they say.

My wife called and couldn't make much of her."

"Nerves! Polite euphemism for madness," grumbled the doctor. "But it's just as well; our village is much too sane."

That day, when he reached home—completely sobered by a long morning of sick-beds; when as he passed the briar-bush it had no smell and he could have sworn at the thrush for singing—they told him that the tenant at the Malt House wished to see him at any time before dusk.

II

It was fifteen months later.

"As I walked half the length of the village street," said the doctor to Miss Ackerman, "I remarked to one person that you sounded sour and to another that you must be mad."

Kathleen Ackerman laughed at him. Here was the woman who had the key; who could unlock—if she chose. She could have filled his state rooms with melody; and for a year he had been begging her to marry him and for a year she had been laughing him aside. It was a laugh full of sadness and mystery—no near relation to the giggle or the cackle; this little negative mirth of hers that went with a shake of the head and a vague look out at—nothing.

"When you look like that," he told her, more than once, "it reminds me of my days at sea. I was always sitting high up on some spiritual mast, searching for a something which I could not spy: on land, I find it after all."

And he wondered if this dear woman, no longer, by any stretch of courtesy, a girl, was merely half awakened—or wholly stunned.

"You thought me mad!" she said, twinkling with fun. "I only pleaded nerves as a barrier to sociability. But the village called at once, almost in a body. The parson's wife and old Lady Gull and all the Larkin girls, and the Joneses and Miss Clutchaway—everybody."

"Perish them—yes. They can run in and out of the Malt House as they choose."

"And so can you—so long as I choose to have nerves. I sent for you at once. Do you remember? They all said you were so cynical, and the word held abundant promise—from their lips. And you are not—cynical."

"It's a high-sounding word for a quality you can't fathom, that's all," said Dr. Ellerton impatiently. "Kathleen! For the five hundredth time, why won't you marry me?"

"Because we are—old. Will that do?"

"Not for a moment. Looking as you do now, I know you for something more juvenile than young."

He was a man of romantic nature and of romantic reading—which means even more. Folklore, classic love tales, old poems of the weird, the mystic, the passionate, they mingled in his memory. His mind was all aroma—of subtle herbs. And a woman who looked as Kathleen looked now could be made—to love. And he would make her love, however long it took. Say they waited ten years, even then she would be the youngest bride the parish church had ever seen, since Love has no chronology. He must, he would win her, come what might. He could not do without her. She had brought into his life—instantly—a wonderful stream of color, a dizzy joy.

"Well, then, because I am—cold?" she amended.

A shadow crossed her. A something spread itself before her face. Was it the hand—of a ghost?

"Yes—you are cold." He stared at the changing face. "At this moment your plumage should be dove-tinted. You have always reminded me of a bird—swooped down—from Nowhere. I rubbed my eyes and saw you sitting—strange, most precious—on the village tree preening your amazing feathers. And my heart blossomed. It's a fruit now—for your beak."

"Don't say—beak. It sounds shrew-ish. And I wouldn't—hurt. I know what suffering means."

The shade across her face doubled; there were two ghostly hands.

"I will say—beak. Yours has been digging at me for more than a year. Kathleen! Why won't you?"

"Marry you?" she said, shrinking, but smiling—sun across snow. "Because my heart is in a grave."

When she said this—the thing that so many women say, because it sounds pretty and it satisfies pride—terror stood on her, colder than tombs.

They were quiet a little, they made a pause, for—mourning—and then she laughed, the quavering sweet laugh he knew.

"You must go now, please."

"How many times have I gone—without a certain answer?"

"Always a certain answer—but you refuse to take it."

She was standing up, looking grave, sweet, pitiful. Her gown, always of bright stuff and soft stuff and plenty of it, fell round her. Her sense of color was distinctly against her social ascent—in this village of sleek shades—shades that were useful, that would wash well or wear well—or do both. Miss Ackerman's neighbors subtly distrusted her. Had she said she was a widow they would have sworn, to a woman, that she wasn't. As things stood, they whispered of her those ridiculous, half-formed scandals common to those stupid good women who are sublimely ignorant of the world.

"Come tomorrow, about this time; and I'll tell—and you shall choose," she said earnestly.

The pallor of graves was on her.

He went—tomorrow! He found her in her garden on the wee strip of grass she called a lawn—a little lawn, a little parlor, a little rough maidservant—one of those delightful young pastoral peasants who preserve the pure Saxon type. And yet he always felt that this bijou poverty of hers was all fairy-like; might vanish altogether; or dwindle to a doll's house or expand into splendor at any moment. It was all part of her difference! He could not explain, the vague qualities

of sweetness and fire and sorrow, that made him think of her always as a sojourner—made him think of her as a gorgeous foreign bird; a rare creature that must be caged quickly in case it flew away. The Malt House itself might turn into a big birdcage, for all he knew.

In the open, sunlit, singing garden, when he would have chosen the silence, the comparative sanctity of a room—out here country folk might blink over the glossy laurel hedge. Out here women of the Miss Rose Larkin variety might happen in at any moment and draw a trail across Magic. But it was Kathleen's caprice. He adored her for her choice—and deplored it. And nothing that she did would ever really displease him. He had once said to her with complete worshipful humility, "I love everything you do." Admiration of the most momentary sort was impossible; irritation and annoyance did not exist.

"I've called," he said, taking her hand and looking droll, "for an answer."

"It is ready."

She was thinking how formal and quaint he was and how indubitably rustic. To look at, he was the typical country doctor. But when you looked in—at his heart's door—you saw the poet, dumb, chained—yet a poet!

"Every old maid," she said, as they sat down in two creaky basket chairs put close together, "has her story. Mine happens to be true."

He looked at her hands—nervous hands, that never kept still. They talked—with her eyes and her mouth. She wore no ring—for Wedlock, Pledge or the Past. He thought, fancifully, that had there been somewhere a precious little discarded ring, locked away, she would have brought it out and worn it once again today—for his enlightenment, even though it hurt her. She owed him something and it would have said so much more than words.

He could not fit to her that term, "old maid"—a term of attenuations, of half-tones. And yet he knew she must be older than Rose Larkin; but there was a woman who was born

old—and would die young, and be hopeless elderly, in each phase.

"I want to tell and let you—choose, today," said Kathleen.

Her face was not a bit beautiful—it was better; a worn, irregular face, magically expressive. The doctor's words for her would have been—battered and romantic.

"Because," she continued, "love can be surpassing. This world offers nothing that is worthy in even part exchange. All the poets tell us that—and they are seers. As to the next world, I suppose we don't lose a single crumb of the joys we've dropped; it is all returned with interest. But the next world is a long way off, and your love is—here. And you hold it out to me with both hands and I—I'm hungry."

She looked so pitiful and empty.

"Love can be—heaven," said Dr. Ellerton, his eyes aglow. "Dear, we could set this village to music. You don't know what love can be."

"But I do," she said with a quick, jealous, almost scornful emphasis; it seemed to tell of emotional worlds in which he'd never set foot. "I do."

And while he was marveling at her vehement voice, the little pastoral maidservant, with the grubby cap and the hair like spun silk, came round the corner of the laurel hedge which shut them in on three sides, to say that a person wished to see her mistress in the parlor.

"There is always a—person—at this juncture," choked the doctor irately, and staring into the china-blue eyes of the maid until she was frightened to death. "Send it away."

"He sez his name wur Chinnery," faltered the little Saxon girl.

Good heavens! The fair, swift change on Kathleen's face, the instant eagle look! She stood up. Dr. Ellerton stood, too, looking black and strained and clumsy, comically professional. "You'll be back soon?" he asked gravely.

"Back! No—never. Yes, of course, in five minutes," she said, and turned away.

And the air to him was heavy with a slow bell. He had seen all—the leaping back of her and quite away and out of sight, the youth, hope and exquisite glamour!

"I've always been an odd chap," he said, moving stiffly. "Would Rose Larkin call this—cynical?"

There was a crooked grin on his fine mouth as he went straight and stealthily toward the open window of the parlor. He looked round once at the garden—a green and red and yellow place. He looked—with dying eyes. Life—of the heart—was over. Over? Still-born. He knew this before he peered through the window. And the passing-bell kept striking—to him. The rest of the world heard only Summer, sleepy sounds.

A big yew grew up close to the parlor lattice. This is the delicious way of an old garden. The dead have planted pigmies, who grow to giants—for the living to love.

Dr. Ellerton played eavesdropper; he did that thing which persons of honor are not supposed to do. Plain people set up common barriers for the heroic to break through. And—in eavesdropping—it depends altogether on what you see and why. Hot men, with great love at stake, do odd things—at those moments of acute living when traditional shackles are off.

He must know—now—who and what was Chinnery! What—and who and why—stood in Kathleen's parlor—that place where he so patiently, with such restrained fires had wooed? He would have put his ear to a key-hole at this final, this rebellious moment.

He looked. He saw a man—a long, lank, elderly chap; this was how he summed him. Old before his time, and yet, like Kathleen, bearing that queer air of unquenchable youth. The doctor did not like the look of him. He struck a macaw note—yet it was only a bright tie, a twist of green that suggested a careless leaf, blown to him just beneath his square chin.

They were standing in the middle of the room, Kathleen and the person called Chinnery. Their faces were wonderful. Their arms hung loose and they seemed to tiptoe. Dr. Ellerton beheld that uplifted, unconsciously birdlike attitude of human beings when—with their spirits, at least—they are about to fly. He understood. His perfect understanding made his mortal agony.

"Cattykins," said this man called Chinnery, speaking in a voice that wasn't earthly, "we are free."

"Free!" she said shrilly, her head back on her long throat.

And he jubilantly flung back, "Free!"

And so this word, from one to one, leapt—lightning along a mountain ridge.

They both breathed it, on a high, whistling, wonderful note—yet nothing like so wonderful as their two faces.

The doctor saw and heard and crawled away—as they rushed into each other's arms with a sound, to him, of wings. But it was a sob—or laughter? It told the long years.

"Cattykins!" he mumbled, as he groped along the village street. This June afternoon was dense as night.

The little silly pet name shut her away from him more than anything; struck into him the doleful fact that she had never been his—and never could have been. Not a single moment of all her life had she ever truly given him—that had been or ever was to be. He would have hoarded even one; would have reckoned himself richer than most men. But this tenant of the Malt House had been merely—a wraith.

"It's—over," he said, as he stumbled along in the sun. "And I must sit on the mast and look—for what will never be.

"Coincidence," he concluded ten minutes later, when he had drifted through his own gate and stood by the briar-bush, "is mere devil's design. It was intended—of malice aforethought—that the person called Chinnery

should drop in just when he did. There's—luck—in the name of Chinnery."

He picked a leaf from the bush and crumpled it—but there was very little smell today—only flowers with large, pink, staring eyes.

III

"THE Malt House is empty again," said Miss Rose Larkin gleefully, a week later.

Confound the woman! She was always up and down the village street; with sick-bed cookery which you could see for yourself, in one hand, and sleek good deeds, at which you could only guess, in the other. Or was it scandal in the other hand?

"Coals to Newcastle," said the doctor. "The notice to quit is in my pocket here."

He tapped his breast and felt the crackle of Kathleen's farewell note—a woeful, joyful thing.

"But you weren't the landlord of the Malt House?"

"I desired complete possession."

"But the place has never been in the market, Dr. Ellerton."

"The prize places never are," he returned airily. "The places that nobody wants, they fly bills in every window."

"They'll have a difficulty in letting that house," Miss Larkin frowned. "The common people have always said it's haunted, but that's rubbish."

"It's Gospel truth, I assure you, on my professional reputation. I've seen ghosts—in the parlor."

"That's only your cynical way. It was quite a romance, wasn't it, about Miss Ackerman, and yet distinctly scandalous. No doubt you've heard."

"I saw—that she was cut out for——"

"Scandal? How discerning of you! So did we—but it wouldn't have been kind, or wise, to say anything while she was living in the village. This Mr. Chinnery was a married man with a wife in the madhouse. They met

twelve years ago, when Miss Ackerman was—well, comparatively young, and they very properly parted. There was nothing else to be done. Dreadful, isn't it—and yet sad in a way. But any truly modest girl would have married someone else at the earliest opportunity, and so buried the episode."

"The truly modest are so often cramped for opportunity," said the doctor, looking down at the brook—which was in a violent hurry, the vagabond, tumbling thing.

"There really ought to be some reform in the marriage laws," said Miss Larkin. "For instance, when a person is hopelessly insane. However, she is dead at last, poor thing. And they are to be married at once—quite indelicate haste, we all think. It's a very sordid story, and I do hope we shall get nice people at the Malt House next time. "Miss Ackerman was never really one of ourselves."

Dr. Ellerton was staring intently, and she became confused—and flattered.

On this gay June day she wore pink—which was the one color she should

have shrunk from! A girlish pink frock, a cloudy pink hat, beneath which her tight, tow-colored curls showed like wool.

He looked attentive, pensive, smiling, inordinately gentle—but all this only for a minute. In his eyes lived the most far-away look that she had ever marked—even in him. She fluttered and—wondered!

Then in a flash he wheeled round like a soldier, muttering:

"She looks like a sheep with a pink fleece."

Miss Rose Larkin caught the last two words—and mercifully lacked the necessary imagination to supply the rest. Her waxy face flushed a damp magenta, and her pale eyes filled with tears. For—to her measure—she loved Dr. Ellerton.

She watched him go briskly across the little bridge that spanned the brook.

There were two hearts, in varying degrees of desolation, one each side this madcap of a brook.

And, flying South, were two birds—long defrauded. And the song they sang—it filled the world.



TO SILENCE

By Arthur Davison Ficke

I MARVEL not earth's holiest feet have sought
 Thy far-sequestered paths wherein to stray.
 Thou art as night to him for whom the day
 Dims the clear planets of his inward thought;
 More than all words, thy haunted hush has taught.
 Poet nor prophet flees thee as do they
 Who, when the world's loud voices die away,
 Deem that thou comest coldly, bearing naught.

Nay, he has found thee fair in many a nook
 Where the night dreams amid the solemn trees;
 Or by the hearth where some old poet's book
 Leads out his soul beyond the silver seas;
 Or in the hour when love on love may look,
 And be as one across the silences.

A COWARD

By Burton Blass

WHEN the last good-bye had been waved to the laughing party on the station platform, and the train had picked its way through the maze of tracks out from the shadow of the long shed, Wagner settled himself with a contented smile to study, in the light of the late sun that struck full into their compartment, the face of his wife—his possession as yet for only two hurried hours.

She, too, was smiling, as with pure content at what life had given her. She took the garish light bravely, and Wagner congratulated himself, with a full sense for the first time of all that was contained in his "luck." His esthetic sense found satisfaction in her, for she was, if not beautiful, abundantly good to look on—tall, erect, vigorous, broad of shoulder and athletic, wholesome through and through, a girl of outdoors and health, mental as well as physical. He had always found her simple and direct, and these were qualities that appealed to him. The complex morbidity of the typical modern woman wearied him. Had he stopped to analyze minutely her nature he would have declared her emotions, though they might strike deep, would never have a wide range. Even now he suspected that they had thus far scarcely been aroused. Certainly she had not deeply stirred his own feelings, and he was content to acknowledge that her love for him was as yet a surface matter. He had no fear that it would not deepen sufficiently under the wise cultivation he would know how to give it.

She interrupted the short silence in which they had been regarding each

other with a free gesture of both arms.

"Wasn't it all fine!" she exclaimed. "It was just the kind of wedding I have always wanted—perfect."

"You're not so glad as I am that it's all over," he returned. "I like this much better than the church and the fuss, my dear."

"Oh, of course, I know you didn't enjoy it," she declared. "You were too nervous and frightened for words, poor dear. How you did bungle with the ring!"

"Yes, I confess I'm a coward," he rejoined, suspiciously complacent. "A public show turns me into a blinking idiot. I dare say I could face a cannon as well as most men—I've never tried it—but the moral bravery that would make a man walk boldly to his own wedding—I!"

She waved her hand deprecatingly, but her smile was still bright.

"I hate to have you even suggest the thought of cowardice, but I'll forgive you anything—anything—today. I'm very happy today, Rupert . . ."

Wagner's leisurely enjoyment, in the smoking-compartment, of his after-dinner cigar testified to his determination not to betray an excess of sentiment, even on this day when such a weakness might be condoned.

"I've just met a New York friend in the smoking-room," he announced when he rejoined his bride. "Philip Nelli, the sculptor. They say he's becoming almost famous—at any rate, he's very clever and well worth knowing. I don't know him extremely well myself, though I believe I sent

him our cards. Anyway, he was very nice and polite, and I've asked him to come in and meet you. I think you'll want to ask him to come and see us when we're settled in New York."

Gracia Wagner had heard the name, and she looked up with some curiosity at the man whose figure almost immediately darkened the doorway. She was simple and inexperienced enough to have "intuitions," and a glance at the dark, square face with its big, thin nose and wide, thin mouth told her that here she encountered the most positive force that had ever come into her life. He was nearly a head shorter than her tall, handsome husband, though powerfully built, the hand with which he steadied himself from the motion of the car was large and muscular. His whole manner was somewhat heavy, in curious contrast to the athletic grace with which Wagner rose to meet him.

The introduction was not accomplished without some awkwardness. Nelli, after bowing gravely and formally, advanced as if on a swift afterthought, and offered his hand. Gracia blushed as she took it, and was annoyed at herself for blushing. She was not a silly schoolgirl, she told herself angrily, and to cover her momentary confusion she assumed an air of unaccustomed reserve. She felt Wagner's effort to fill the sails of conversation and was grateful for it, though it was futile. Nelli kept his eyes on her in a way that made it hard for her to regain her spontaneity. After a few minutes of perfunctory talk he withdrew, and Wagner faced his wife with comical perplexity painted on his face.

"I wonder what was the matter with Nelli," he began after a moment's pause. "I never saw him like that before. I'm afraid you didn't care much for him. I noticed you said nothing to him about coming to see us—and I don't wonder. Nelli is peculiar sometimes. A man once told me——"

What it was that Wagner had been told Gracia never knew. The shriek of a whistle and the grinding noise of the brakes were followed by a shock

that threw them both violently across the compartment. The glass of the window splintered. For a moment they heard the groaning of the reluctant wheels, accompanied by a succession of jarring shocks, and then came a great crash. There was a horrid sound of snapping, crackling metal and splintering wood, and the car seemed to rear itself in the air. Just as the lights went out Gracia saw the face of her husband, white as the face of a circus clown, with the staring eyes and distorted mouth of a clown. The window sash, jagged with broken glass, stood partly open. In the darkness she felt, rather than saw, her husband spring to it and wrench it up. She lay perfectly still while he forced his big body through the aperture. Above the shrieks and cries and groans that now filled the air she thought she could even hear him drop to the ground.

She had the bravery of perfect health. The swift action of her practical mind told her that for the moment at least the danger was past. The car was motionless. Until now she had felt no pain. As she tried to collect her forces for some effort she realized that she had wrenched her ankle so violently that she was unable to stand. She felt blood trickling from a wound in her hand, probably from the glass. Already, though the events that had passed were measured by seconds rather than minutes, she had begun to think collectedly and try to formulate some plan, when she heard the door of the compartment forced open and her name spoken. Afterward it occurred to her to wonder how, in the darkness, she had known at once who it was.

"I'm all right, Mr. Nelli," she said in a quite matter-of-fact tone. "Only my ankle's wrong—sprained or broken or something."

He scrambled down to her, and gave one look out of the window.

"Are you sure it's nothing but the ankle?" he asked, and without waiting for a reply gathered her up clumsily but carefully in his arms. "Put your arms around my neck and hold tight, so I can have a hand free."

He made his way slowly with his burden up the sloping floor to the door, then down through the narrow passage into the aisle. The car was tilted half over an embankment, and Nelli lowered her carefully through a window that opened close to the ground. He turned to catch a blanket from a berth already made up, and then let himself down beside her. Without awaiting his bidding this time she put her arms around his neck again, and so he carried her to a place of safety. Having wrapped her in the blanket and laid her on the ground, he knelt, breathing heavily, and busied himself with the injured ankle.

Only the briefest of necessary questions and answers passed between them. When he had done all that was possible for her immediate comfort he left her—there were others near-by—and walked toward an official who was running up, lantern in hand. A group of men stood near the window out of which they had come. A tall figure came running out of the group, and Nelli recognized Wagner.

"My God, Nelli—my wife!" the man cried. "Where is she? They won't let me go in there—say everyone is out—no one in our car was killed. But I can't find her. Where is she?"

Nelli shook off the hand the other had laid on his arm.

"Here's your wife," he said shortly, and led the way.

There were lanterns all about now, and though their light was dim it was enough to show Nelli the look of utter contempt, of physical loathing, which for a moment Gracia turned full on her husband. Then she turned her face away without a word. Wagner stood with a hand to his head, looking down on her. Nelli wheeled sharply and left him.

II

RIVERSIDE DRIVE was in its freshest Spring dress. Gracia Wagner hurried, a little out of breath from her brisk walk, up the steps of her house and let herself in with her own key. It was

close to the hour when Philip Nelli was to come to her, and often as she had seen him in the six months that had just passed she felt vaguely that their meeting today was to be of more than usual moment. The note in which he had announced his intention of coming had had a somewhat peremptory, impatient ring. Besides, she knew that the state of unstable equilibrium of which they had thus far maintained the appearance could not in the nature of things endure.

After the accident that had turned their honeymoon into a tragedy or a farce—Gracia thought of it each way in turn—Wagner had brought his bride direct to the house he had prepared for her. Her injuries, though slight, and the severe nervous shock furnished an excuse for the inauguration of a mode of life which had continued unchanged. Outwardly she had assumed the position of his wife. Actually they were poles apart, separated by the ineradicable scorn which she had conceived for him in that one moment. Simple, honest, courageous as she was herself, the one quality she demanded imperatively in her husband was manliness. Her instant contempt for his cowardly panic had hardened, under the influence of the shock to which she was subjected, into an obsession of repugnance. A sense of duty curiously at variance with her practical spirit in ordinary matters kept her to an outward observance of the marriage bargain; she was at least too proud to pretend to more than a formal acceptance of the bond. It had been easy at first to take up a mode of life that required only the most formal intercourse with her husband. Except at the dinner-table, and on the rare occasions when they went out together, they seldom met.

Her attitude toward him had received emphasis from the object-lesson, so significantly present at the critical moment, of Nelli's behavior. Whatever of the heroic was lacking in the actual circumstances of her rescue was sufficiently apparent in his intention. Had the danger been multiplied indefinitely he would still have braved

it. His prompt thought of her, as if he realized that her husband would show himself inadequate, also proved to her that she had in some way impressed herself on him in their first meeting. Her own mixed feeling toward him, which might in other circumstances have developed into strong dislike, had been turned by his cool courage into passionate admiration. He alone knew the whole truth of her relation to Rupert and its cause, he alone understood and approved. On the basis of this understanding their acquaintance had ripened into intimacy with a rapidity of which, had she been less reckless of consequences, she might have perceived the danger. She had few friends in New York, and Rupert, if he had wished to introduce her into his own circle, had abandoned the idea in the face of her evident indifference.

It happened quite naturally that Nelli became the companion of her otherwise lonely days. They walked and talked and read together they even made long excursions in the automobile which Rupert had given her. Gracia finding blissful security in the sense that she was so little known. She was actually so isolated that none of the talk inevitably engendered by such a course came to her ears. Had she heard it, it is doubtful whether it would have weighed seriously with her. Her sense of the proprieties might have survived the loss of the rather immature though sincere affection she had once felt for Rupert; it could not survive the loss of her respect for him. Here she was as hard, as inexorable, as only a young girl of intense, narrow passions can be.

To herself she insistently disclaimed any intention of punishing Rupert. She intended to be perfectly fair, and her assumed attitude of indifferent aloofness was a punishment more effective than the most refined and studied cruelty could have been. After his first tentative efforts to rehabilitate himself in her eyes, Rupert seemed to acquiesce, with a kind of pathetically humble dignity. Except in the pres-

ence of others, she and Nelli made scarcely a pretense of regarding him. They came and went with no effort at concealment, tacitly assuming that he had forfeited every right to exercise any control over his wife's conduct. When the two men met, which was rarely, Nelli's attitude was one of ill-concealed contempt; Rupert's, of distant formality. As between Gracia and her friend, Rupert's existence was practically ignored.

For the time being Gracia was content to let this condition continue, and it was her fear lest it should be near its end that made her await Nelli with some anxiety. When he appeared—she had been watching for him, and let him in herself—she found instant confirmation for her fear in his manner. He was nervous and abrupt beyond his wont.

"You've been out?" he said, noticing her hat and coat. "Why didn't you let me know?"

"You surely wouldn't expect me to stay indoors on such a day as this," she answered lightly. "I couldn't go this morning, and as you yourself sent word that you would come at four, I took my walk first."

"I might have come earlier and walked with you." He stood looking gloomily out of the window.

She met his remark with some gravity. "I'm afraid we must be more careful about being seen so much together. I'm sure everyone within blocks of us must think you are—that you live here. Yes, we must certainly reform. Things can't go on this way."

"Things can't go on this way," he repeated after her, and turned to face her squarely. "I agree with you, and that's why I've come today. I've not seen you for four days, and I've been thinking this thing through to the end. There must be an end. Shall I tell you what it must be?"

She sat quite still now, watching him as he paced the floor. Nelli did not wait for her permission to go on.

"I needn't tell you, of course, that I love you. You've known it all along. And I needn't tell you that you love

me. You know it and I know it. If you were to tell me that you didn't, I should simply not believe you. But you won't tell me that. You're honest. I've kept still so far—I've held myself in—with a sort of hope that things would right themselves; you have felt the same way, I suppose. But we're acting like children in this; things don't right themselves. It takes someone to do it. That's what I've been thinking out these days. We must take this snarl in our hands, Gracia, and undo it."

"There is nothing we can do—nothing we can undo," she said.

"Yes, there is—there must be," rejoined Nelli. "I've never yet spoken to you about your—about Wagner. But now I must. I can quite understand, Gracia, how you came to marry him. But that was long ago. He had his chance, and he threw it away. I won't call him hard names, but God knows he's nothing to you. He hasn't the faintest shadow of a right to keep you tied to him—to spoil your life, when even he has nothing to gain by it."

"No right but what I gave him," was Gracia's answer. She spoke as if tired. "Don't imagine I've given no thought to my miserable affairs. I'll not begin now to pretend with you—I wish it could all be undone. But there's only one way, and—and Philip, I've a horror of divorce. I know plenty of divorcées—they're common enough these days. But I don't know one that I want to be classed with. It's not only that it's so horribly cheap, and public, and vulgar; it isn't right. My own self-respect is worth so much to me."

"But there is no moral question involved," Nelli continued to walk back and forth, and his tone contained a shade of irritation. "Don't you understand, Gracia, that your marriage was only a meaningless form? You are not even, in a sense, legally bound. There needn't even be a divorce. On a plain statement of the case your marriage would simply be annulled by any court."

"I don't think I quite understand

the difference," said Gracia slowly. "In any case it means an appeal to the law—doesn't it?—to let me break my promise, and escape the consequences of my own deed. Besides——"

She stopped at the sound of someone entering the house. There was a momentary pause, and then a slow step mounted the stairs. Nelli stood still, and the two looked at each other significantly.

It was the man who broke the silence. "Have you ever thought that it might really, in the end, be the kindest thing for him——?"

"Oh, yes, I've thought of that." Her tone indicated that no hope lay in that direction. "At first, when it seemed so horrible, I even spoke to him about a separation. He didn't seem to understand entirely. And I know that for himself he doesn't want it, though he would, of course, agree to anything I proposed. Do you know, Philip, my feeling toward him has really changed a little. I can't hate him, or even despise him entirely, as I did at first. When I think how I should hate myself if I were—if I had done what he did, I know he is unhappier than I am. And he has tried to bear it decently. You know how strong and athletic he used to be? Now he's all broken down in health—really ill. I can never forget—oh, you know what I have to remember!—but I can't be resentful. I feel as though it couldn't have been his fault. And, Philip, it's strange, but I don't believe he really loved me at all at first, and now I'm sure he does. If I should do anything now, I believe it would kill him."

"Then what do you propose to do?" demanded Nelli. Again he halted before her. "Do you intend to go on with this mockery of a life, tied to a man who is no more your husband than the first man you meet in the street? Do you never think at all of me? Do you deny my right? Don't you know that you are mine as you were never his, and that the greatest wrong you can do yourself is to deny us the life we have a right to live?"

She put out a hand as if to shield herself from his words.

'Don't, Philip,' she said. "Don't reproach me for doing what I must do. Don't show yourself less brave than I know you. We must wait—a little. Perhaps if something were to come from him—I But I can't go to him in cold blood and beg him to let me off. Yes, we must wait a little. And always, always, dear one, you will know, won't you, that I love you, and you only—no one else, only you?"

III

THAT Philip Nelli would acquiesce in the inaction proposed to him by Gracia was not to be expected. He possessed, perhaps as an inheritance from his mixed parentage, curiously diverse traits: impetuosity and tenacity, strong emotions and cold-blooded indifference where his feelings were not engaged. Even Gracia, who gave him the fullest confidence along with her love, felt him to be a man of extreme potentialities. She was so conscious of the strength of his purpose that her usual decision of character was weakened when he returned to the subject now constantly in their minds. Yet Nelli found it impossible at once to change her attitude; and after recurring to it a few times, he apparently granted a temporary acquiescence. It was a sign of the extent of Gracia's perturbation that she was not wholly pleased with her rather easy victory. She had expected greater persistence on the part of her lover, and his tacit agreement with her threw her back on a renewed questioning of the convictions on which her decision was formed.

Thus the weeks wore on, with no prospect of an essential change in the situation. Her formal, distant relations with Wagner had begun to harden into habit. Her regret at his semi-invalidism was sincere; she had long since outgrown her active resentment, and had no wish that he should suffer. But this brought her no nearer to

feeling that she had anything now to offer him. The memory of his betraying weakness was a permanent bar to any personal sympathy.

If Nelli counted on time to bring her to his way of thinking, there was no sign that the event was approaching. More and more frequently they were together; more and more Gracia gave him her entire confidence, showed him her entire dependence on him for happiness, without the remotest suggestion that their anomalous relation could not endure. Whatever his own expectation, in these days, may have been, the certainty came to him at last without warning in a note from Gracia:

Rupert died last night—quite suddenly. His heart, it seems, has never been right. His father and brothers are here, and will do everything. Please don't come now—not for a time. I think of you.

GRACIA.

It was nearly two weeks before he saw her. After the quiet funeral she was out of town for a few days. He watched closely for her return, and was at the house on the following day, without waiting for a word from her.

At the news of Rupert's death he had felt only relief, which he saw no reason for hiding from Gracia. Something of the same feeling he expected to find in her, and he had been a little piqued at her failure to appeal at once to him, her silence and absence without a word. He was disturbed to discover in her appearance the signs of suffering, of agitation not accounted for by the strain of the mere events of these weeks. At the same time all the tenderness he could feel for her was called out by her condition.

"You should have let me come to you sooner," he began at once, as he took her hand. "It could have been arranged quite decently, and you ought not to have had to bear all the trouble and responsibility alone. Why didn't you let me help you?"

"You have helped me, Philip," she replied. "The constant thought of you has kept me from being all at sea. And now I'm glad you've come, though I was not ready to send for you. But

you are honest and strong, and I want your help. These have been very hard days."

"I know it, dear." He held her hand quietly in his as he spoke. "The excitement and care have been too much for you."

She shook her head. "It isn't that. Of course, everything at such a time is horrible. But if it had been that alone I could stand it." She paused for a moment. "Philip, did you know what the trouble was—what caused Rupert's death?"

Nelli looked out of the window, across the Drive, at a boat making its way slowly up the river. "You told me in your note it was his heart—that was what the newspapers said."

"Then you don't know—I hoped it hadn't been talked about—that it was an overdose of some medicine?—digitalis, I think the doctor said. I was in the room when Dr. Burt came. He said he had been treating Rupert for weeks for his heart. Lately he had taken to using something to stimulate its action. There was a half-empty bottle of it on his dresser." She hesitated for some seconds, in which neither moved. Then she went on very quietly: "I wonder if he did it on purpose?"

Nelli started at her words and looked closely at her. "Gracia, you have been too much alone, you're getting absurdly morbid. Have you the slightest reason for thinking that?"

"Yes, I have." She spoke slowly, but none the less positively. "Dr. Burt looked queer when he saw that bottle. He was on the point of speaking, and then stopped himself. I am perfectly sure he suspected something. He was a very good friend of Rupert's."

"My dear child," Nelli broke in on her, "you're laying too much importance on a mere surmise. It's past now. Suppose even that it is so; you can't help it."

"No, but I might have helped it. Philip, it's the thought that I may be directly responsible for it that I can't bear. I couldn't be happy with you on such terms. You know how I felt

toward Rupert. I could never have been reconciled to him. But it wasn't altogether his fault, and he had been doing his best to live it down. And I know he did love me. If I drove him to that—I won't have it!" she cried passionately. "I won't take my happiness from him if I killed him."

She was weeping now. The sight was too much for Nelli.

"Stop, Gracia!" he cried. "You are not responsible—I tell you you are not."

Something in his tone seemed to arrest her attention curiously. "What do you mean?" she demanded.

"I mean just what I say—I know you are not responsible," he repeated doggedly.

She looked at him for nearly a minute, so steadily that at last his eyes shifted, avoiding hers. Then, "Philip," she began, "I know you're honest. If you are not, it is the end of everything for us. I want you to tell me exactly what you mean. Do you know anything about Rupert's death?"

"N-no—not really," he replied.

She refused to be put off. "Tell me just what you know."

Nelli had sprung to his feet, and was walking rapidly, nervously to and fro, as was his habit. "There's nothing at all that I actually know. I only guess. I talked with him one day. I went to see him—it was soon after the time when I first asked you to free yourself. The whole snarl seemed so idiotically useless, and I had to free my mind. I told him what I thought of him—I've never pretended, even to you, that I didn't despise him. I said to him that his life was nothing but an obstruction to your happiness—that it meant nothing to himself, to you, to anyone, but unhappiness. He didn't say much. I didn't suppose he had spirit enough to take it to heart much. Only when I heard he was dead I knew—that is, I wondered—well, let me bear the blame!" he cried with sudden defiance. "Let me take the responsibility. I'm not afraid of it. I'm glad to have done it for you. At least you know now it was not your fault."

As he talked he had grown more confident, carried along by her quiet intentness. He even thought he saw signs of relief in her face, and she had stopped weeping. But she was silent for a long time, and he was becoming more and more nervous under the strain. At last she spoke, and the calm in her voice at once reassured him.

"Thank you for telling me this. Yes, I'm glad you told me. I could not have endured the uncertainty. It's a relief to know it all—it's something like happiness. Yes, it is happiness to know that the man to whom I once gave myself, the man who was to

have been my husband, was not altogether a coward—that he was, in his own way and time, the bravest man I shall ever know. That is so much like happiness that I can't think yet what it means to know that the man I thought I loved is a coward—that I don't love him, and never can. I'll know that all in time—I must have time to think. Please go now."

Against the darkness in which Nelli groped one truth stood out white—that the woman before him was uttering final, irrevocable things. He bowed his head and stumbled out of the room.



STORM AND CALM

By Clinton Scollard

NOT always for me the calm,
And the breath of balm—
Blue skies over the vale,
And the nightingale
Singing its silvery psalm!

Rather, to pitch my blood
To the flow of flood,
The wild wind-welter and strain
Of the driven rain,
And the thunder's clash and thud

Without some tang of strife,
With fervor rife,
Tame indeed is the taste
(Good brew gone to waste!)
Of the wine in the cup of life!



BRIGGS—I see that Higston died very suddenly at his office the other day.
GRIGGS—Why, I met his wife at the seashore, and she said nothing about it.
"No; she was having such a good time that it was thought best to wait until she came back."

WIRELESS

A MODERN EPISODE IN ONE ACT

By Alice Leal Pollock

THE PEOPLE IN IT

GEOFFREY TRENCH (*of England*).

GRITTY ARMSTRONG (*of New York State*).

KANE DE COURCEY (*of New York City*).

HEZ ZEEMS (*of the State of Connecticut*).

THE PLACE: *The interior of a wireless telegraph station on the shore of Long Island Sound.*

THE TIME: *A little later than Now, on an afternoon in Spring between sunset and moonrise.*

SCENE—An oblong room, with rough plank walls hung about with charts, maps and one or two lithographs from periodicals. At back a large window occupies fully one-third of space, revealing sky and water scene—with islands and yachts dotted in the distance. Down centre a long table with "Wireless" and "Morse" apparatus. R. of table the "juice"-making machine; L. of table a litter with papers, telegraph blanks and pamphlets. Telephone on wall L. 4. F. Stove of country-store type, back upper right. Tin coffee-pot on stove. Window lower right; door left. A few deal chairs. With curtain, GRITTY, the receiver at his ears, is discovered smoking a pipe, reading a periodical, lounging at the table. Occasionally he glances at the instrument as if worried. There is a flash denoting a wireless message. He takes the message, gives a prolonged whistle, transmits the message over the Morse telegraph, then makes a few notes. There is a ring on the telephone; he crosses and lifts the receiver.

GRITTY

Hello, hello, *hell*—o! Yes, this is Wireless. Very sorry, madam—but it's against the rules. You'd better try the steamship office again. Your what? Oh, your boy? Well, now, don't do that—(*drops receiver.*) Ugh, tears! (*Shakes himself, takes up receiver, listens, goes through dumb show as if protesting.*) Now, madam, if you'll just take a brace—it'll be all right. We haven't heard direct, but the *Emperic* passed her yesterday—and everybody's safe aboard even though they'd lost a screw. We're sure to hear from the *Kaiserin* herself any minute. Not at all, madam—glad you feel better. (*Hangs up receiver, goes to operating-table, makes notes, takes another wireless message.*)

Enter GEOFFREY TRENCH.

TRENCH

Good afternoon. May I have a look at your layout?

GRITTY

Certainly—make yourself at home. Why, in the name of all that's spooky

—Geoff Trench, where'd you drop from?

TRENCH (*shaking hands vigorously*)

Gritty! Who'd 'a' thought it, old fellow! Say—I am glad.

GRITTY (*pulling up chair, bringing pipes and tobacco*)

Sit, pal—sit. Let's have a look. Two years, isn't it? Same old bulldog Trench. Smoke?

(*They light pipes, look at each other searchingly, and shake hands again.*)

GRITTY (*slightly shamefaced*)

Say, old pard (*laboriously*), I've—I have—oh, hell's fire—I'm married!

TRENCH (*with apparent indignation*)

What! (*suddenly weakening.*) So am I.

GRITTY (*exploding*)

You—you!

(*They shake hands again vociferously—sit and smoke.*)

TRENCH

You tell first.

GRITTY

Not so much to tell—it's simple and sweet, like Daisy herself—and the kid. We were sweethearts at school; when I left the Cape and came back home we just spliced up 'cause it seemed the nicest thing in the world to do. Got a little house near here. (*Thinks.*) No use talking, marriage is it—ain't it? Now it's your say.

TRENCH

When you left me down in that God-forsaken land I went to the wolves—*quick*. They nearly got me—and would have devoured me, too—bone, muscle and sinew—if it hadn't been for *Her*. Fancy, a clergyman's daughter—but you'd never have dreamed it. Preach—never a word—just faith—beautiful, all-powerful faith—enough for ten devils like me (*They smoke silently a while.*) You say marriage is fine—it's the greatest thing in the world, Gritty.

GRITTY

You bet.

(*They smoke meditatively.*)

TRENCH

I've got a boy, *too*.

GRITTY

Mine's a girl.

March, 1908—7

TRENCH (*with an assumption of superiority*)

Oh!

GRITTY

We must let the two missuses meet?

TRENCH

Rather! Soon as the wife lands—she's crossing from London now with the boy. The boy, Gritty—*my* boy—and I've never even seen him, though Joyce says he's clean cut *out* of me—fancy that!

GRITTY

You've never seen him?

TRENCH

No—it's this way. Six months ago when the International made me an offer to take charge of the office at Oakland Joyce wouldn't hear of my not going. Brave little soul! She promised to follow as soon as she was strong enough; then, after the boy came, her old father's illness kept her. So it's been near half a year—half a century to me. But every hour is bringing them nearer now.

GRITTY

What ship's she on?

TRENCH

The *Norderland*. You ought to hear from them before long.

GRITTY (*consulting chart*)

Yes—they ought to be about two days off now.

TRENCH

You haven't had word from them yet?

GRITTY

No.

TRENCH

Seems to me—

GRITTY

Now you quit that worrying right now, old feller. We never hear much before that. There's been a lot of talk about striking clear to the other side with a message. Sounds well enough in a prospectus and helps sell shares, but it hasn't been done yet. It's in the air, of course—a man's as like to strike clear across the continent this minute as next. And I'll tell you what—the guy who does it *first* needn't worry about the comforts of home, any more, any more!

TRENCH (*eagerly*)

Suppose I told you I had perfected the system so that striking from 'Frisco to New York was mere child's play?

GRITTY

Say? Say! Well—you'd have to show me first—see? And if you *could* show me—you *wouldn't*. You'd show the gazabos at the head and make your pile 'stead of wasting time gassing round here.

TRENCH (*as if he had said too much*)

You're about right there, old man.

Enter HEZ ZEEMS in hayrick hat and overalls.

HEZ

Be it safe to come in?

GRITTY

Safe as your grandmother, so long's you keep tight hold of those whiskers.

(HEZ, *clutching his whiskers, steps in gingerly. There is a flash denoting a message. He falls flat on his face, whimpering.* GRITTY *takes the message.* TRENCH, *laughing, raises HEZ, who darts out of door with a shriek at another flash.*)

GRITTY

There goes a piece of the backbone of our Nation.

TRENCH

Are the natives often as bad as that?

GRITTY

Worse! (*Taking up whisky bottle.*) Keep supplied with this just to revive 'em. Uh? (*Holding out glass and bottle invitingly.*)

TRENCH

No.

GRITTY

Really?

TRENCH

Really.

GRITTY (*putting down bottle*)

Bully for you!

HEZ *puts his head through the open window, still terribly afraid.*

HEZ

Ef y'll hold back that thar deevil a minute, mister, I've got somethin' to tell ye that might int'rest ye.

GRITTY (*laughing, puts hand on instrument*)

Unburden thyself, gentle stranger.

HEZ

Beyou a-livin' in the little white house with the big green hedge anext to the cemetairy? (*He begins to chew complacently.*)

GRITTY

That's the ticket, old spooependikes. HEZ (*chews for perhaps ten seconds; then very slowly*)

Wal—I guess then, mister—it's your house what's afire.

GRITTY

You (*bounds to window and pulls HEZ bodily over the sill*)—you blamed idiot—now speak!

HEZ

Ouch—ouchie! Lemme go! All's I know is—I wuz a-plowin' the right side of the left-hand field, when a stranger comes along in one of them thar deevil wagons an' sez he wuz jest watchin' a neat fire—an' from the description uv it I allowed it were yourn and come to wurn ye. An' durn sorry I be I did!

GRITTY

My God, Geoff! Daisy and the kid are all alone! What's to be done?

TRENCH (*with assumed unaffectedness*)

You just get out of this quick—it may not be so bad. I'll take charge here for you.

GRITTY

Bless you, old pal! (*Getting into coat.*) You understand everything. There's the Morse. There's the telephone. Here's a list of the overdues. Keep a sharp watch for the *Kaiserin*—she's out of her course. Here's the day's record. (*Fumbles under the papers back of table; unearths a pistol; holds it up.*) This—in case you're visited by a crank—see where I put it? (*He shoves the pistol back under papers.*) You'll make out all right. I'll send you word. (*At door turns back.*) In case you get hungry, you'll find some sinkers in the cupboard and there's some coffee brewing. Good-bye, good-bye!

(*They grip hands, and he rushes out.*)

TRENCH (*at the door, watches him go*)

That's the only shady trick I've ever played you, Gritty.

(TRENCH *pulls himself together as if nerving himself, looks around, darts*

here and there examining instruments, goes to closet; brings out jars, begins to add to those in generator; then takes small case out of inner pocket and starts to dicker with the instruments; all feverishly, with suppressed excitement. The room grows darker; the rays of the setting sun glint on the instruments. Hez, who has been chewing, unobserved, at the window, making several attempts to jump as things looked dangerous to him, gingerly remains.)

HEZ

Wal, I swan!

TRENCH (*looking up, startled*)

I've got to get that bit of chaff out of my way.

HEZ

Mister, d'y'e mean to tell *me* that them thar ships comes into the bay tied to a wire and sends ye words—re-all words?

TRENCH

No wire—wireless—and they can stay right out in the ocean and do it just as well.

HEZ (*stroking whiskers*)

No wire? Wal, by gosh!

TRENCH

Hezekiah, much as it may pain me—here is where you and I agree to part. (*He gives a quick wrench of the instrument; there is a blinding flash. Hez vaults out of the window as if struck.*)

TRENCH (*imitating*)

No wire? Wal, by gosh! (*He closes and fastens the window, then darts to the telephone.*) Hello, hello, Central. This is Wireless. I want a clear wire to New York left open—don't let anything interfere. You understand. All right. Good-bye. (*Busies himself at the instrument.*)

Enter KANE DE COURCEY, in fashionable clubman's attire; the typical nerve-racked New Yorker.

DE COURCEY

Well?

TRENCH

Well!

DE COURCEY

Is the coast clear?

TRENCH

Clear as a wire.

DE COURCEY

Good. The idea of his "house on fire" fetched out your operator neatly. We came near having a nasty mix-up, though; he objected quite strenuously to a sixty-mile-an-hour spin in my flyer. If we hadn't provided three to one, the ten devils in him might have upset some of our calculations.

TRENCH

Gritty always did love a fight.

DE COURCEY (*suspiciously*)

You know him? I thought you said—

TRENCH

He was my best friend once—before I took to this sort of thing.

DE COURCEY

Come now, Trench—you're not showing the white feather at this stage?

TRENCH

I'll see you through this—but it's the last crooked thing I ever touch—so help me God!

DE COURCEY (*shrugging shoulders*)

You won't need to, Trench, if we get through this today. Twenty-five thousand at the least for you, and the Lord only knows how much for me. It's a sure thing—if there ever was one. You've got a great head, Trench. *Tapping the Wireless!* Who'd ever have thought of it but you? (*Laughs in mirthless excitement.*)

TRENCH

Stow all that—will you?

DE COURCEY

Your man at Oakland can be depended upon?

TRENCH

He can.

DE COURCEY

What time should we hear from the first race? Five hours' difference between this and 'Frisco, isn't there?

TRENCH

I should say at about seven.

DE COURCEY (*looks at watch*)

We've lots of time. (*Sits.*) Ugh—these Spring evenings are chilly. (*Takes out a filigree flask, unscrews stopper, forms glass.*) Have a bracer?

TRENCH

No, thanks; but I'll have a swallow of Gritty's coffee—and I believe there

is a bag of doughnuts in that cupboard. *(He exits for a moment, during which DE COURCEY looks swiftly around, takes small silver revolver from hip pocket, cocks it, places it in his coat pocket.)*

DE COURCEY

In case our young friend seems inclined to renig—

Enter TRENCH.

TRENCH *(at stove pouring coffee, munching doughnuts; holds out paper bag.)*

You won't join me?

DE COURCEY *(shuddering, waves him off)*

I'm not heavily enough insured to risk it. Whisky's good enough for me. *(He pours out and swallows two glasses, one after another.)* You're sure your telephone's working?

TRENCH

Yes, I made certain a while ago.

DE COURCEY *(pouring another glass)*

As I remarked before, Trench, you've got a great head.

TRENCH

And as I remarked before, *stow all that.*

DE COURCEY

You can't deny it. Great head. Who but you could have thought out such a scheme? To beat the races with the Wireless. Great—great! *(Roars with laughter.)* Wouldn't some of those pikers in town jump at the idea, though! Remember, Trench, you gave me your promise that I should have a monopoly on this graft.

TRENCH *(who has been fuming through this)*

Now you listen to me. I'm in this with you today, and I'll stick. But after today you and your kind can go to eternal perdition, for all I'll know of you. I've got a great head, you say—don't I know it a million times better than you *ever could*? And don't I know what a cur I am to prostitute the gifts God gave me for you and your kind!

DE COURCEY

The native coffee seems to have had a really disarranging effect—

TRENCH

Don't be too witty—that's like you

gougers—you run across a poor devil like me who has more brain in a minute than you have in the growth of your whole rotten family tree, and you use him because you're on top of the money-bags, and the more of his soul he sells to you the more you grin and gloat. But I warn you—after today—my soul belongs to me—me alone. Now, we'll get to work.

DE COURCEY *(nonchalantly walking to stove, lifts coffee-pot, smells it, makes wry face)*

I thought so—enough to upset a rock.

TRENCH *(at instrument; calm again)*

I'm going to give the signal to tell Oakland we're ready.

DE COURCEY

Suppose another station caught your message?

TRENCH

Again my great head has foreseen all and arranged the neatest little cipher ever. Now hold fast. *(Sends message; after a few seconds an answer returns.)*

DE COURCEY *(eagerly)*

Have you got them? *(TRENCH waves him aside.)* What do they say?

TRENCH *(making a few notes; reads)*

All ready—first race in half an hour. Congratulations.

DE COURCEY

What's he congratulating us for so soon?

TRENCH

Not us—*me!* Because I've done what even the greatest of 'em couldn't do—circled the globe with Wireless! Me, Me, Me! *(He begins to pace up and down excitedly, muttering to himself.)* Think of it, De Courcey!—around the world with a flash—it's child's play after this! How I've worked and worked for it God only knows, and now I can't believe it's true. *(There is a flash denoting another message.)* Hello! I wonder what they want now—it can't be time for them yet. *(Goes to instrument; after a moment puts it down.)*

DE COURCEY

What do they want?

TRENCH

It wasn't Oakland. Must have been some boat. They've lost me. Maybe I can get them again. (*Sends several signals; finally receives an answer which at first he takes indifferently; then suddenly shrieks wildly.*) Oh, my God!

DE COURCEY

What on earth has happened? (TRENCH, *unhearing, continues to take the message, which finally stops.*) What is it, Trench? Speak!

TRENCH (*dully*)

It's a ship—the Norderland—she's on fire! They've lost me—I must try to get them again. (*Sends several ineffectual messages—growing more and more frenzied.*)

DE COURCEY

Well, suppose they are afire—you can't help them?

TRENCH

Oh, God—that's just it. I can't help them!

DE COURCEY

What's it to you, now, anyway? We're playing for bigger stakes.

TRENCH (*wildly*)

Bigger stakes! When the only beings I care for in the world are on that ship! Bigger stakes—! (*Goes off into hysterical laughter. There is a flash; he goes to the instrument.*) I've got them again—listen. "Fire started by emigrants in steerage—at first no danger—it slowly gained—slight mutiny quelled by officer's pluck—now they are lowering the boats, a man has just been shot for knocking down a woman with a baby. One boat is off—the second boat is being lowered—the flames are creeping up her—cannot send——"

(*There is a dead blank silence. TRENCH tries in vain to get them again.*)

TRENCH

Gone—gone—gone! Did you hear? A brute just shot for knocking down a woman with her baby! O Joyce, if it should have been——!

DE COURCEY

What's all this to you, anyway?

TRENCH

What's it to me, man? My wife—my little wife and baby were on that

ship! (*Wildly.*) That's all—that's all—that's all! (*Staggers to window at back, staring out to sea.*) Now they're lowering the third boat—soon it'll be night 'way, 'way out there in the slimy green; and that third boat will go up—up on a great black wave, like a tiny white bug, and come sliding, sliding down, down, down! Oh, God, I can't stand it! (*He breaks utterly, sinks into chair with head on table.*)

DE COURCEY (*conventionally*)

I'm awfully sorry—really sorry, Trench, but you're powerless to—do anything now—absolutely powerless. So brace up and let's get through with this. (*There is a flash denoting a message. TRENCH, completely lost, ignores it.*) Trench, can't you hear? Don't you see? There's a message——

TRENCH (*sullenly*)

Let me alone.

DE COURCEY

Are you crazy? There they are again. (*Putting his hand on TRENCH's shoulder.*) Brace up, and go ahead. That *must* be Oakland.

TRENCH

Oakland be damned! Do you think I could go on now with the thought of her out there with the babe tight in her arms, down, down at the bottom among the awful, unnamable things, with her sweet eyes closed and her curls tangled in the coral! (*There is another flash.*)

DE COURCEY

For heaven's sake, Trench, don't be crazy. We may have missed the first race by now—think of all we're losing.

TRENCH

I don't care. I don't *care!* Lose? A man can lose his heart and soul and no more. It's my punishment—it's God's hand striking in my hour. (*To himself.*) She used to warn me, too, when she'd slip her little hand in mine. She knew me and feared—though she never said it out. And when I left—her last words—how I remember *now*: "Geoff dear, whatever happens—a clean life in God's sight, for my sake—and our boy's!" You see, she was so sure it was going to be a boy. (*Spring-*

ing up.) And *this* is the clean life—here with you—you— (He springs at DE COURCEY, trying to clutch him by the throat. DE COURCEY wrenches himself free; whips out his pistol, covering TRENCH.)

DE COURCEY

Now, Mr. Geoffrey Trench, if you don't wish a nice, clean quick finish, you'll walk over to that table and take those messages without any more heroics. Oh, one moment— (He goes to him, covering him, and searches him for a weapon.) No little surprises for me. Now go.

(TRENCH gives one swift look at table, obeys and sits at instrument. DE COURCEY, being assured, puts pistol in pocket, leisurely takes out cigar and lights it. TRENCH, apparently busying himself, slides hand behind instrument, gets GRITTY's pistol, and sweeping the litter of papers from the table, covers DE COURCEY, who holds lighted match in one hand and cigar in other.)

TRENCH (between his teeth)

Now, you snake—get out of here quick! One move (as DE COURCEY makes a treacherous motion to get his revolver)—One—remember, I have nothing to lose.

DE COURCEY

My hat and stick.

TRENCH

Go to the door.

(DE COURCEY moves to door; TRENCH crosses, takes DE COURCEY's weapon from his pocket and "breaks it"; gets his hat and stick, drops weapon into hat and passes them to DE COURCEY.)

TRENCH

What time did you order them to bring Gritty back?

DE COURCEY

At eight—if my memory serves me.

TRENCH

Good evening.

DE COURCEY

Good evening! (Exit.)

TRENCH (at door, leans heavily, stares out, lifts hand, looks at pistol. The idea of suicide slowly comes to him. He sits at the table, staring ahead, gradually growing wilder in gesture as his thoughts overmaster him. Whispers)

Down—down—down! (He takes up the pistol and strokes it lovingly. The glow from the sun has meanwhile died down and the moon begins to rise.)

TRENCH

Gritty, old boy, you should be back soon. I can't wait much longer—she's calling me—she needs me. Oh, Joycedarling, wait—soon—soon—soon! (He stares out again; after a while he looks at his watch.) Gritty won't mind if I go now. She can't wait—she can't—she needs me so— (He has taken the pistol, raised it to his temple, when GRITTY, who has been at the door watching TRENCH's strange actions for a few moments, rushes to him and wrenches the pistol from his head.)

GRITTY

In God's name, Geoff, what has happened?

TRENCH, (the tension broken, begins to sob; hands pistol to GRITTY)

Take it, Gritty! Take it away where I can't reach it. She wouldn't want me to do it. She would want me to be brave and live. I was trying to make believe she was calling me, because I am a coward—a miserable coward!

GRITTY (quickly getting bottle and a glass)

Here, drink this, Geoff—you've got to. (Forcing him into a chair.) Now, tell me.

TRENCH

The Norderland—the ship she and the babe were on—burnt—gone down—the boats are adrift now.

GRITTY

They got that much to you? (TRENCH merely nods. GRITTY puts his hand on TRENCH's shoulder—speechless.)

TRENCH

Stick to me, Gritty, even if I don't deserve it.

GRITTY

I'll stick.

TRENCH

Wait until you hear. The man who hired those men who grabbed you, also hired me to use the wireless so he could cheat his friends out of thousands—

GRITTY

I don't quite understand.

TRENCH

It's quite plain. You out of the way, a New York wire clear. My new apparatus going at the other end, and we can get the information on the races at Oakland at least five minutes ahead of the sharpers who use the wire.

GRITTY (*slowly*)

I see, but—how much were you to rake out of it?

TRENCH (*shamefacedly*)

About twenty-five thousand.

GRITTY

Geoff Trench, you fool! Have you proved you can reach Oakland?

TRENCH

Reach Oakland? I can circle the globe.

GRITTY

And you risked your reputation for a measly quarter of a century when—don't you see—can't you realize what this means?

TRENCH

Yes—but that takes time. I'd have done anything for a little ready money to meet her coming. (*Taking out a roll of papers.*) Here, Gritty—it's your secret—I give it to you freely. See here, that's all. Take it. I don't need it now.

GRITTY (*after examining papers hurriedly and trying messages*)

Why, that's Oakland now—they're using our old cipher. Geoff, you're a wonder! We could start a new company with this. I know a rich guy who would float this to any limit. You'll be the president and I'll be the general manager, promise me that.

TRENCH

I don't want it, Gritty—there's nothing in it for me now. (*Breaks off and*

sinks into chair, head in hands. There is a flash denoting another message.)

GRITTY

There they go again—no, it isn't Oakland—it's the overdue *Kaiserin*. (*Takes message slowly; suddenly he calls wildly.*) Great God! Geoff, come here, quick. I've tapped the overdue *Kaiserin*—she's off her course—and she's just picked up a boat! They're gone, now—I've lost them. Geoff, don't you hear? They've just picked up a *boatful of castaways!*

TRENCH (*whispers tensely*)

Gritty, be careful. I couldn't bear it—you know I couldn't bear it.

(*A long pause, during which they stare at each other speechless; then another flash.*)

GRITTY

It is—it is the *Norderland's* boat!

TRENCH

The names, Gritty, the names! For God's sake—the names!

GRITTY

Steady, old man—steady. There they are again. Now, steady, steady. (*He slowly spells out the names.*)

Luigio Ferrara, of Florence, Italy.
Miss Chiswick, of London, England.
Mr. Burton Strong, of New York, U. S. A.
Mrs. Livingston, of Boston, U. S. A.
Sir Beverly Kingcraft, of London, England.

(*TRENCH, who has been trying to pull the names from the wire, pushes GRITTY away roughly and tears the receiver from him. The message stops.*)

TRENCH

Go on—go on! Oh, God, why don't they go on! (*Then wildly*) Mrs. Geoffrey Trench and son, of London—they're safe! Gritty, they're safe—safe—safe! (*He sinks down at the table—his head buried in his arms, sobbing hoarsely.*)

CURTAIN



THE ONLY WAY SHE KNEW

HE—I think Miss Bond has such a sweet smile.
SHE—So all the men tell me.

A MIRACLE OF ECONOMY

By Thomas L. Masson

“WE must economize.”

Mrs. Plumpton-Jones, as she uttered these startling words, looked almost fiercely at her husband.

That gentleman expressed his surprise characteristically, holding his match in midair so long that it died out before he thought of lighting his cigarette. Then he threw the charred stump away, and said, with an assumption of facetiousness:

“I think I see you trying to economize, Emily.”

“But I mean it. And really it’s quite the thing to do. Everyone I know is retrenching, all along the line, so that we shall only be doing what others are. Mrs. Van Antler has discharged her head butler. The Prices were going to build another cottage at Ardsley this year, but they’ve given it up. Don’t you approve?”

“Approve! Well, rather! I should say I did. But I didn’t dream I could ever bring you around to it. We need to, certainly. Why, some of my accounts have been running over a year.” Plumpton-Jones smiled broadly. “What a surprise it would be to some of them,” he said, “to get a cheque from me.”

“Now I didn’t mean that,” said his wife. “You business men always jump to conclusions. You like to pay up everything all at once—on the minute—and you are eternally calculating and making columns of figures. It is not necessary to go to an extreme, and pay everyone at once. But we can at least begin to cut down. Really it will be quite fun.”

Mrs. Plumpton-Jones had not had a new sensation for so long that this

thought of economizing came as a wonderful refreshment.

It was all the more delightful because, from a social standpoint, everyone else was doing the same thing.

“Now,” she said, “let us begin. I’m nothing if not practical. How about the chauffeur?”

“Suppose we begin at your end of it?” suggested Plumpton-Jones mildly.

“You mean——?”

“Take the household expenses—the servants—your personal bills.”

“Very well. First, I shall do away with the butler. I’m sure we can get a competent woman at half the price. That is six hundred dollars a year at once. Then I will supervise the ordering myself, and that will help.”

“I should say it would,” drawled her husband. “if you don’t get tired of it. The servants must cheat us outrageously. I know it costs nearly two hundred a week for the table.”

“Well, I’m sure, by giving it personal supervision I can cut it down immensely.”

“No doubt. How about your clothes? Have you an idea of their cost?”

“Only vaguely.”

“Say fifteen thousand dollars a year. Can you cut it down to ten thousand dollars?”

“Say twelve thousand dollars.”

“Very well.”

“And you know, my dear, I do not need more than one pair of horses.”

“Now don’t go to an extreme,” said Plumpton-Jones. “That might defeat the whole object. Suppose one of them should get sick?”

“I could get a pair from the livery.”

"Which you never would do."

"Well, suppose we keep four, instead of eight. That will enable us to cut down the servants to one groom instead of two."

"Very well—a saving of about a thousand."

"And now about your chauffeur? How much do you pay him?"

"You forget I have two."

"So you do."

"I pay one eighteen hundred—the other twelve hundred."

"Couldn't you get along with the twelve-hundred one?"

"What! How would *you* like that? Don't you work them to death now, as it is?"

"Well, I won't any more. I'll only use the cars when absolutely necessary. Besides, as I remember it, Gabriel is not satisfactory."

"He might be better."

"Well, look about. Mrs. Van Antler says a reliable American can be had for a thousand a year, if you use some perseverance."

"One always hears those stories."

"Well, try."

"I will."

"And you might cut down your racing expenses. How much does the track cost you?"

Plumpton-Jones fidgeted slightly. The subject was an unpleasant one.

"I make money at it," he said briefly. "I won twenty-nine thousand dollars on Stagnation alone last year."

"And how much did you lose from Rosebud?"

"I'll make that up."

"Now, now, don't deceive me. You must meet me half-way. Can't you save at least three or four thousand by cutting off corners?"

"Certainly."

"Very well, then," triumphantly exclaimed Mrs. Plumpton-Jones. "Now you add it all up. See how much we are going to save. Here's pencil and paper."

Plumpton-Jones put down the items. All told, it amounted to ten thousand dollars a year.

"Splendid!" exclaimed Mrs. Plump-

ton-Jones. "You see how it can be done. A little management, a little forethought, are all that is necessary. And now I must be off."

For once in her life Mrs. Plumpton-Jones was in dead earnest. Whenever she undertook a thing she entered into it heart and soul.

She discharged servants. She interviewed tradespeople. She did not hesitate to demand estimates. And with the most delightful air of martyrdom she explained to everyone that "retrenchment" was the order of the day.

"It's really wonderful," said her friend, Mrs. Van Antler, with a congratulatory pressure of the hand, "what you are doing. It must be hard to make sacrifices, but really, my dear, so far as appearances are concerned, no one would dream that you gave the matter of expense a thought. I wish I had your head."

At the end of six months, one morning at breakfast—once a week she took breakfast with her husband—she startled that gentleman by saying:

"My dear, we have saved ten thousand dollars."

"How do you make that out?" said Plumpton-Jones.

"Here are the exact figures. This is what we would have spent if we had gone on, and this is what we did spend. The difference is ten thousand dollars. Isn't that quite plain?"

"So it seems."

"Then I should like it, please."

Plumpton-Jones smiled satirically.

"You saved it, didn't you?" he asked. "Very well, then, you must have it."

"Nonsense. I've spent ten thousand dollars less for you than usual, and it is mine by right. If I had not made such a sacrifice, and denied myself and worked like a slave, you would have been so much worse off. You pay the bills, don't you?"

"When I can."

"Very well. The money passes through your hands. And instead of paying ten thousand dollars to others please now hand it over to me."

"What do you want it for?"

Mrs. Plumpton-Jones smiled a large, wise, worldly smile, with a touch of coyness thrown into make good measure.

"I suppose I must tell you," she said. "It's too good to keep. It's lovely, anyway."

"What's lovely?"

"Why, there's a string of pearls at Barr's or, rather, there was—and Mrs. Van Antler had her eye on them, and wanted them the worst way. They are simply superb. I found out about it, and got Barr to reserve them for me. It was too good a chance to miss. Besides, don't you think I deserve them?"

Plumpton-Jones lighted his inevitable cigarette. It took him twice as long as usual. His mind worked slowly.

At last he said meditatively:

"So you want ten thousand dollars to pay for a string of pearls! Can't you stand him off?"

"Well, hardly. You see, I'm going to pay him ten thousand dollars down, and——"

"How much did they cost?"

"Now you know, my dear, you couldn't get a decent set of pearls for just ten thousand dollars."

"How much did they cost?"

Mrs. Plumpton-Jones tossed her head triumphantly.

"They cost," she exclaimed, "ten thousand dollars—that is, actually."

"What is the amount of the bill?"

"Twenty thousand dollars, you—goose. I'm to pay the rest later on. But don't you see that they really cost only ten thousand dollars, because if I hadn't economized, I wouldn't have had the ten thousand dollars I've saved to pay for them? Isn't that plain?"

Plumpton-Jones opened his cigarette case and gingerly extracted another cigarette, which he rolled carefully in his fingers. Then, as he lighted it critically, he said:

"Of course, my dear girl, you couldn't have performed this financial miracle if you hadn't economized. That's quite evident. But for heaven's sake, please don't try to economize again."



HEART'S TWILIGHT

By Archibald Sullivan

DEEP in the twilight of my heart
 I hid a rose;
 Red petals on its red.
 At dusk I looked to greet its velvet face,
 And wept—the rose was dead.

Deep in the twilight of my heart
 I hid a kiss;
 Red mists about it shone.
 At morn I looked to raise it to my lips,
 And wept—the kiss was gone.

Deep in the twilight of my heart
 I hid a tear,
 A pearl in its red sea.
 At night I looked to star it in my dreams;
 The tear—awaited me.

THEIR HONEYMOON

By T. Thurston

LETTER FROM MRS. HENDERSON JONES,
A RECENT BRIDE, TO HER MAID OF
HONOR AND DEAREST FRIEND, MARIE
STANLEY, OF MICHIGAN AVENUE, CHI-
CAGO

HOTEL MAJESTY, N. Y.,
Wednesday Evening.

MY DARLING MARIE:

'Tis true I promised to write you the moment I arrived in New York and tell you all my first impressions of that city of our dreams—so, here goes!

The wedding seems more of a dream than New York, so far, and oh, Marie, wasn't it the sweetest thing, if it *was* mine, the color scheme—those *dear* bridesmaids, all in pink, and you marching on ahead, with your arms full of sweet-peas, and your eyes full of Jack Nugent! I saw you, if I wasn't supposed to see you, and he surely was a "best man" to rave over. If it hadn't been Henderson, I know perfectly well I should never have allowed Jack to fall to your lot, but then, it *was* Henderson, and there could not possibly have *ever* been anybody else; so keep your "Jack of Hearts."

And that reminds me, Molly dearest, you're not to breathe it to a living soul, but I'm here, in New York, on my honeymoon, and *all alone*, which brings me to the real subject of my letter. You see I had to lead up to it, for fear you would feel queer if it came too suddenly.

We stayed in Cleveland, *en route*, just for the fun of getting off and wandering around, and when we arrived here this morning up trotted a hall-

boy with a telegram, which had gone the rounds of the hotels, and, failing to find us, had been sent here. It called Henderson back to Chicago immediately—a business tangle, and nothing but his presence and his signature would possibly do. Now, wouldn't it have been too absurd to have all my loving friends see me come posting home in that short space of time? No, indeed, especially after your elaborate "send-off," a repetition would have been more than mortal could stand, so I just said, "You go, and I'll make myself comfortable here until you can make the trip and return, and none of them will ever know." But of course I privately reserved you, because I simply had to tell someone.

So he went, and oh, Molly! I cried and cried and cried and regretted and regretted, but it was too late, for he was miles away so I vowed a vow that I wouldn't go anywhere while he was gone, nor even stir out of my room. I read the only book I had, for of course I didn't bring a trunkful of books when I expected to be talking to Henderson. Pretty soon it grew dark and lonely, and I was hungry, for I was so busy weeping at luncheon-time that I could not eat, and dinner for one in my room didn't seem to appeal to me at all, so I dressed in my black crêpe de chine, thinking perhaps they'll take me for an interesting young widow—anything but a bride without a husband, and, though I'm scared to death (for I never before went into a hotel dining-room alone), I'm about to beard the lions in their den, and do so now.

When I had this gown made I

thought it would make me look like a poor old thing, as mature as mother, but somehow it doesn't in the least.

I will write you every day, as I promised. If I were not so desperately lonely, the situation would appeal to me as rather amusing, but you must admit it's quite pathetic.

Always your devoted JEAN.

LETTER FROM GEOFFREY HARCOURT,
A RECENT BRIDEGROOM, TO HIS
BROTHER-IN-LAW AND BEST MAN, AL-
BERT PERRY, OF NEW ORLEANS

HOTEL MAJESTY, NEW YORK,
Wednesday Evening.

DEAR AL:

Awfully nice of you to tuck those cigars and magazines into my suit-case, old man. It never occurred to me to bring either. I somehow just imagined I'd talk to Mary forever and there could be no greater joy for me on earth—unless it were to have Mary talk to me!

I'm in an awfully queer situation, and worried to death. We reached Washington all right, and I thanked heaven the wedding was over and I'd never have that to go through again. Why do girls want such fusses? I hate them myself, though Mary was certainly a stunning bride, but then she'd be a winner wherever you put her—you can't stunt Mary! Where was I? Eh, Washington. Well, somehow, Mary took cold there and when we arrived here she felt so rocky that I called in a doctor, who said "Grippe," and grippe it is! He sent in a trained nurse, though he looked funny when I insisted upon having one, and said it seemed hardly serious enough for that; but I take no chances where Mary is concerned, after trying all these years to get her.

I dined in solitary state, and felt lonelier than you can fancy. I never remember feeling that way before, in all the years I've been dining alone. I sauntered up the stairway and stepped into the little palm-room above, which looked inviting and empty. At the far end stood a girl in the most dejected attitude, and all in black—

which was most becoming—and who do you think it was, Albert, old fellow? Little Jean Cawson, the girl I had such a flirtation with that Summer in the Adirondacks! In fact, it was really rather more than a flirtation. I proposed to her, out and out, and while she didn't turn me down, she wouldn't say yes. There seemed some reason which I couldn't fathom. I was called away suddenly, and have never met her since, but I knew she loved me desperately, for—well, I just knew it; a man can always tell. I think I once told her I'd never marry if she refused me—that was a gorgeous night; a man had to say things on a night like that—so, when she came to meet me, with the prettiest pink flush on her cheeks and that same look of adoration in her eyes (and her eyes, by the way, are lovely, particularly when you haven't seen them for four years—that big, blue-gray sort, with long lashes) and said, "Why, Geoffrey, do you live here, too?" I felt a bit queer. She didn't say, but I gathered that she was stopping here alone and had lost a relative. She seemed awfully depressed, and spoke of her great loneliness; so, as the nurse had insisted that Mary must be quiet, I sat and talked over old times with Jean for an hour or two, and I didn't mention my marriage, for the poor little thing looked heart-broken enough, without any further complications. I wonder why it is that a woman can always flirt, even if the bottom is out of everything! Jean has not lost the art, of which she was always a past mistress. I'll let you know how Mary is tomorrow. Don't worry, even though I do. Always yours,

GEOFF.

LETTER FROM MRS. JONES TO HER
FRIEND, MISS STANLEY

HOTEL MAJESTY, N. Y.,
Thursday Evening.

MY DEAREST MARIE:

The dinner wasn't so horrible, after all. I ate awfully fast; one always does, I think, when alone.

I have noticed that New Yorkers stare in a very rude way—especially the men. After I had finished dinner I started up in the elevator, but, as we stopped at the first floor, I caught a glimpse of palms through a glass partition, and the temptation seized me, and I yielded.

I was all alone, or thought I was, when I heard a footstep. I turned and saw, not a stranger, but a familiar face. Marie, I could have hugged our postman at that moment, I was so deadly lonely! And when a friendly voice said, "Jean—Miss Cawson," I was delighted, and who do you think it was? No one but Geoff Harcourt, who was my best beloved all that Summer in the Adirondacks, four years ago! I nearly fell on his neck for pure joy.

He seemed to take it for granted that I was still unmarried—men are so obtuse. And he looked at me in such a dear, appealing way that I hated to tell him. As you remember, I told you in strict confidence at the time that he said he would never marry unless he could marry me; I was sending him out into the world, a heart-broken man, and all that sort of thing. They always say it, but I knew, in his case, it was the real thing—a woman can always tell, so I "tempered the wind to the shorn lamb" and was very evasive as to my presence in New York, and being alone, etc. I didn't exactly lie, Molly, but I hedged; and do you know, I wouldn't have believed I could have spent such a pleasant half-hour—it couldn't have been more than that, at the most—considering the hopeless state of misery I was in.

Geoffrey has grown since I saw him. He's more of a man and has a worldly touch which is rather becoming. I felt that he was sorry for me in some way—I can't tell just how; but I tried to be just as nice as I used to be to the poor lad, so that when the blow falls he will have these pleasant moments in retrospect. He said our meeting was a bright spot that he should always hold most dear, and we

parted, not expecting to meet again—but we did.

I came down to breakfast, and there he was! He had just come in, with a great bunch of roses in his hand. I wondered, for an instant, if Henderson would mind; but why should he, when he knows how I adore him; and it's known, the world over, that a woman never loves two men at once; so, while I hated to take them, I tried to be my nicest, and thanked Geoff for his sweet thought of me, and took the roses—great beauties they were, too—tucking one in my belt, where it was most becoming to my pale gray gown.

You can't imagine how embarrassed he was; he seemed all broken up, so I said, "Come now, we must breakfast together, just as we used to at Lake Placid."

I poured his coffee, and every now and then the tears would come when I thought of Henderson, 'way off in Chicago, pouring his own, and I at breakfast with another man, whom I truly wished at the ends of the earth. Isn't it great, Marie dear, how we women have to dissemble, and act a part all through life, and always for the benefit of some man, who would never lift his little finger to save us from an instant's pain?

Geoff asked me if I had seen much of the city. I told him I should go nowhere at present, and left him with his paper and flew to my room to write to my darling. I have written him four letters so far, and I've had six telegrams from him. He's not sure yet when he can return. Isn't it too awful? I wouldn't have anybody know for worlds.

This afternoon I ordered a hansom and drove out to the Park, with Henderson's picture tucked in my coat. Geoffrey passed me in a motor, looking very solemn. I suppose he's hurt because I didn't go with him. I'm not sure that he asked me, but I'm perfectly sure he expected it.

I put on my gray embroidered crêpe voile for dinner. Henderson would wish me to look my best, I am sure, even if I am alone, and I pinned a rose

in my lace berth before looking in the glass. I'm not so sure that Chicago isn't in it with New York, after all. That certainly is a very pleasing gown.

Again I met him, this time in the elevator going down to dine. Of course there was nothing for it but to go *à deux*. He looked me over in such a funny way, especially at my hands. I had taken off my rings, and wore only a diamond bracelet, "the gift of the bridegroom," as the papers put it.

"Jean," he said, "you are an enigma."

"Can't you solve me?" I asked.

"No man ever yet tried to solve a woman, expecting to win," he answered. Then he laughed.

I have forgotten so many things about him that it's rather fun to revive him. I do hope he will go away before Henderson gets back. I don't feel as if I could ever explain that I am married, and see that hurt look come into his great dark eyes. What would you do, Marie, in my place? He doesn't say "Miss Cawson" any longer, just "Jean," and once it was "Jean dear"; then he seemed to remember something, and bit his lip. If he were the least bit of a flirt, I should know how to deal with him—as it is, I can only "temper the wind."

The dinner was delicious—we were hours eating; so different from last night in every way. The palm-room was like an old friend.

Give my love to all the girls, and do run in to see mother, just for my sake; but not a word of all this, remember!

Your poor, lonely little

JEAN.

LETTER FROM MR. HARCOURT TO MR. PERRY

HOTEL MAJESTY,
Thursday Evening.

MY DEAR ALBERT:

This really beats—the deuce! I'm certainly up against it. I'd be pleased to know what you would do in my place. Mary is still out of the running.

That nurse is a tyrant. Why I ever took her I don't know. She insists upon quiet, and banishes me as though I were a leper. So there's nothing for it but to kill time, and at every turn I meet Jean Cawson. I can't seem to escape her. This morning I went out early and bought a big bunch of roses for Mary—great pink things, just her sort, and as ill luck would have it, I ran plunk into little Jean, on her way into the breakfast-room. She wore gray, which I'm partial to, though it isn't Mary's color at all.

Of course I stopped and told her how charming she looked, which was no lie, and I laid a rose against her cheek—it exactly matched! She seemed shy, which isn't like her, when I called her "little Rose," and hummed that line from "Violets"; then she suddenly put out her hand, broke off a rose, tucking it in her belt, which I could but think its proper abiding place, it looked so very fit, and thanking me, in her characteristic way, for my "sweet thought of her," possessed herself of those roses in the twink of an eye, and said, "Come, my lord, thy breakfast waits." And before I knew it, sir, there we sat, like a bride and bridegroom, *tête-à-tête*, over our morning coffee. Everyone thought us married, I know, for even the waiter looked benign, and when he said, "Will your wife have the fruit, sir?" I nearly died. I know she heard, for she was pink to the edges of her pretty hair, but she tried to look haughty, while her eyes were all swimmy with tears when she looked up.

I feel such a brute—why, if I weren't married, the only thing for a fellow to do in a case like this would be to propose at once, nor stand upon the order of his proposing—undoubtedly she thinks me an idiot now, for failing to do the proper thing. I wish to thunder you'd come on, Al, and take her yourself—you'd never regret it, for she's as sweet as it is possible for any woman to be—who isn't Mary. There's a charm about her, old boy, that's all her own; and to think she has hung to the memory of a man like me for four years! It's—well, it queers me every

time I think of it. She sailed out of the breakfast-room with her arms full of roses—Mary's roses—and every man in the room stopped eating to watch her pass by.

I looked all through the register and can't find her name. I must ask her about it. She seems to be in half-mourning for someone; perhaps it's her father. I must ask her about that, too. Funny how many of the nicest girls don't marry nowadays.

I took a ride in a machine this afternoon and passed her in a hansom. Gee! I felt mean, but I couldn't ask her to go with me, now could I? Not that Mary would have cared, but on her own account, don't you know! I must let her down softly. I suppose she'll faint when she finds I am with my wife. I am really hoping she will go before Mary is up and about, which I pray may be soon.

Tonight, by the way, we dined together again. She wore the most ravishing evening gown, with one long-stemmed rose—my rose—fastened at her breast with a diamond crescent, and on her arm was a bracelet the Czarina might well envy her. I heard a white-haired New Yorker say as we passed him, "A Mr. Harcourt and his bride, I believe," and the other man answered, "The neatest thing in brides that I've seen in many a day." I started to ask her about the register, but she has a most tantalizing way of waltzing a man away from a subject. I'm really no nearer than I was before.

She certainly flirted with me all through dinner. The lights, the music, the "eats"—all were conducive, and, like "the little old woman on the King's highway," I wondered, "Can this be I?"

Don't worry about Mary. She's better, and sends her love to you. I'm thinking this is the loneliest honeymoon a man ever spent. Sort of queer situation, isn't it?

Always yours,

GEOFF.

LETTER FROM MRS. JONES TO MISS STANLEY

HOTEL MAJESTY,
Friday Evening.

MARIE MIA:

I cried all night, and had breakfast, a roll and coffee, in my room; then, when I had counted every rose on the wallpaper fifty times, till I thought I should go mad, I got up and unpacked all my gowns and tried them on, with not a soul to see, which was worst of all. That blue chiffon, Molly, is angelic; I've always been dying to have Henderson see me in that, and there he is, at the very end of the earth, and I'm—I'm here, and New York a big, awful, lonely place.

Oh, Molly, I almost wish I were dead. I ordered luncheon in my room. There was no use in going out alone, I'd only have gotten lost, but finally, at five o'clock, I grew desperate, and plunged into the Park and walked and walked. Fate called "check," for I *was* lost, in truth, and if I hadn't met Geoffrey Harcourt, mooning along the path, I should never have seen the hotel again. How he knew me, I can't think, for I was all muffled in a motor veil, and was dressed in black, looking, I know, just like an orphan ward of some cruel person.

He said, "See here, little girl, I'd like awfully to help you; tell me your trouble. I'd give all I know to serve you in any way—you surely know that."

Almost was I tempted to tell him, then and there, about my sweetheart, wrenched from me by a cruel message; but the sight of his beseeching eyes brought me to my senses, and I stopped right short, and told him I guessed what I needed was diversion.

"Well, I'll tell you what we will do," he said; "I will take you downtown to see something—don't ask where we're going, just trust me."

I'd have trusted a Russian Cossack just then, I was so absolutely miserable, and there's no denying he was trustworthy, and we did have a lovely time, Marie, though I suppose it was the con-

trast to my former state of woe that made it seem so simply beyond words. Yes, I know I am reckless with adjectives, but you know how uninteresting a letter is which half describes and leaves the rest to your imagination, particularly if imagination isn't your strong suit.

But, to return—I wore that white gown you said you wanted, if I ever died, or had to go into mourning, or anything, and my big lace evening coat, which Geoff said—but never mind what he said; you wouldn't understand. We whizzed off in a motor to a most delectable place for dinner; quite bohemian, where everybody looked jolly and sang in time to the music, and seemed good fellows with everybody else.

Then we strolled over to the Garrick, and saw the latest Shaw play—the most perfect thing, but not quite—well, not the kind mother would care for, I'm sure, but so true to life and interesting. If Henderson had been there, I could have squeezed his hand and given him little punches at the jokes I wanted him to enjoy with me, but with Geoffrey, of course, I had to keep remembering; though I did borrow his handkerchief once to mop my eyes, when they threatened to overflow, as I suddenly remembered that I had been married all these days, and no one had called me Mrs. Jones, once. I guess *any* woman would cry over such a thought as that.

Of course, when the play ended I insisted upon going directly home—if that great mausoleum of a hotel could be so designated—but Geoff said, "Let's go to Sherry's. We needn't stay, except for an ice, and we may never be together this way again."

Being a woman, I yielded, rather than hurt his feelings, and was well paid for my folly. Who should be sitting at a table quite near the entrance, with a large party, but the Devoe Curtises from St. Paul! Fortunately, they were having such a gay time they didn't see me, and that Nelly Curtis was letting a man make love to her in the most brazen way—

she was horribly made up, too—and Devoe was equally absorbed in a large, ponderous woman.

We passed them safely, and had a table in the far corner, and everything promised to be lovely, but it wasn't—it was horrid. Geoffrey acted all the time as though he were just enduring it—and me. He was ill at ease, and kept glancing at some people near us, who, I must confess, did their share of the staring. I should have gone at once, but there were those fearful Curtises barring the way, and I could almost guess the letters they would write home, about seeing me with another man, at that hour, and just married, too. They were at the wedding, you know—such a mixup! You cannot escape the inevitable, my dear, be warned!

Going out, we skirted the room. Geoffrey seemed to be playing hide-and-seek with our recent neighbors, while I was at the same game with Nelly and Devoe. We were caught in the shuffle at the door—not knowing, Geoffrey rushed me right into the midst of the Curtis crowd. I protested to them that I was in an awful hurry, and, I may as well confess it, I lied. I did it for Henderson. I told them he was on ahead with my escort's wife, and just as I turned I heard that Geoffrey Harcourt telling the selfsame thing to those impertinent people whose eyes had not left us since we came in, only, I think he was assuring them that his wife was with my husband!

Somehow, we escaped. In the motor we each drew a long breath, but I couldn't explain, and he wouldn't. The beastly thing acted as if he were ashamed to be seen with me. Well, he wants to make the most of it—it's his last outing with me, and I doubt if he ever has a nicer one. At the door he tried to be nice, but I could see it was an effort, and I let him realize it was too late. When I left him he was the picture of woe.

Tomorrow I shall avoid him entirely. I wish I could hate him. I can at least act as though I did, which will have the same effect on him. If he

has any sense, he will probably change his hotel at once. No word from Henderson today.

Your forlorn little

JEAN.

NOTE TO MISS STANLEY FROM MRS. JONES

HOTEL MAJESTY, N. Y.,
Saturday Noon.

MOLLY, MY DARLING:

Guess what's happened! A telegram from my own beloved! He is almost here, and I am to meet him in an hour, at the Grand Central. We go to Boston, without a moment's delay, *en route* for Nova Scotia and Canada, where he has been sent by the firm, to represent their large interests. The cream of it is, we may go to London before we return. My trunks have gone, and I am waiting, in such a state of excitement that I think I may lose my mind. Isn't it like a beautiful dream! The nightmare is ended, and I have only the perfect future before me. My only regret is Geoff.

I did not go down this morning, so I have not seen him. Men get over such things, so I suppose he really will not suffer long. Now that we are parting, my resentment of last evening is fading. Pity has taken its place. Well—there are other girls, and he is yet young; still, I cannot bear to hurt anything, especially so faithful a lover as he has proved. Some day, when he knows all, he will thank me for going this way, without a word.

The carriage is waiting. Hurrah! Good-bye, dearie, I will write from Boston. Remember, you are never to even hint to anyone about my interrupted honeymoon. It has had its

pleasant side, after all—for others, if not for me.

Your happy

JEAN.

P. S. Why didn't I think of it before? *You* shall have Geoffrey, yourself—he is just the one for you; so forget Jack at once. You two must meet the moment I return.

NOTE FROM MR. HARCOURT TO MR. PERRY

HOTEL MAJESTY, N. Y.,
Saturday, 3 p.m.

DEAR AL:

This is the most perfect of days, for my darling is once more restored to me. The nurse is banished, and life again looks like heaven. Mary wishes to get away from this place and forget she has been ill, so we are all packed, and are going down to the Gotham, in an hour, for change of scene; which the doctor says is all she now needs.

I did not go down to breakfast this morning, so did not see Jean. Dear little girl, some day, when she knows everything, she will thank me for going away without a word, though I confess I feel like a cur when I think how it will hurt her at first. It seems cruel to have her meet Mary just now; later, when she sees things more calmly, it will be different, and the very first chance I get I will look her up, and bring you two together, for all time. She will be a gift for which you can spend your life in thanking me. The carriage is waiting. Mary will write herself, tomorrow. This tale of my interrupted honeymoon is quite *entre nous*, remember, old chap.

Yours joyfully,

GEOFF.



NOT ON THE CARDS

FLIPPER—I didn't know he had an accident when he was out motoring with the chorus girl.

FLAPPER—The accident was his wife who happened to catch him.

March, 1908—8

THE CELEBRANTS

By Ludwig Lewisohn

THE great, white lamps swing to and fro;
The plays are out; the restaurants
Throb with pale crowds that come and go—
Night's unimpassioned celebrants.
Beautiful women with cold eyes,
Silvery shoulders, crimson mouth,
Drink the sharp cordials of the South,
Or, with strange smiles and mimicries
Call to wan cheeks a hectic glow . . .
The lamps swing gravely to and fro.

They have heard Wagner: in their blood
Tingles the music's sovereign mood;
They have seen Tristram at the ship's
Tall helm, and drained with Iseult's lips
The fatal philtre in the wine.
They laugh, they speak—but each observes
Quietly how the sounding nerves
Feel Art's essential anodyne.
They have banished care, regret and woe,
While the great lamps swing to and fro.

From argent revelry they pass,
From jeweled wine and crystal glass;
Where Broadway curves into the night,
Where swing the great lamps grave and white,
They whirl in monstrous motor-cars,
Forgetful of the wintry stars,
Of the strange darkness far behind
Where in the bitter, biting wind,
With writhing limbs, grotesque, half-bare,
The starved tramps drowse in Union Square.

II

WHAT vision seek these revelers?
What glory under glittering skies?
Ah, the unquiet heart still stirs,
Still burns the fever in their eyes.
The unavailing clamor dies,
The music fades, the lights are out,
And still the ancient Worm of Pain,
Gnaws in the windings of the brain,
After the madness of the rout,
Unconquerable and unslain.

They flee the luster of the sun,
 And in the pale, electric fire
 Still they pursue their hearts' desire
 And riot's end—oblivion.
 In vain! But once in fateful times,
 Seeking, they shall achieve their doom,
 And from their festal boards shall rise,
 A company of muttering mimes
 With marble front and agate eyes
 That peer through universal gloom.

Not theirs a Babylonian fate,
 Never shall these towers and palaces
 With Nineveh lie desolate
 Nor ruined be this city's gate.
 The subtle gods will grant to these
 Pale throngs the gift for which they pray,
 Who, on a dim, disastrous way,
 Ere yet their souls are wholly blind,
 Shall, in that prayer's fulfilment find
 The Terror of a Judgment Day.



THE BUNGLER

By Elsa Barker

I MADE a man out of my own great need.
 I took the body of one ready-formed
 In Nature's workshop, but its blood I warmed
 With my own fire. Half of my soul I freed
 To animate the form; the dream, the deed
 That makes man god-like, these from the great void
 I conjured, and my temple veil destroyed
 That he might see the Image burn and bleed.

But when I questioned this created thing,
 There was no voice to answer, for the breath
 Divine I had not given—could not give!
 Confounded before God, I only bring
 Into creation's hall this masque of death,
 That wears the mold of life, but does not live.



MRS GADSBY—Has she any friends to speak of?
 MRS NOWLY—No, she hasn't any that you would care to talk about.

THE EXQUISITE REVENGE

By Algernon Boyesen

WHEN the small circle which we egotistically style the world heard that Oscar Waith had granted his wife a divorce on most magnanimous terms it fairly buzzed with excitement. We knew Waith for a big, hulking, surly fellow, handsome after a brutish fashion, who confounded the cynics by leading a life of exemplary virtue and bored a blasé society by expounding middle-class notions on the sanctity of hearth and home. That he should voluntarily have given Isabelle Waith her freedom, in the face of such theories, was inconceivable: that he was in the wrong was equally out of the question. A man with the loftiest principles may occasionally, in a moment of mere earthly exultation, out-revel the veriest sybarite, given a certain quota of imagination; but Waith had no imagination. If, on the other hand, the lady had erred—her breeding hushed such an audacious assumption on the lip of gossip—Waith was not the man sublimely to spare her; he would have pilloried her for the missiles of the mob out of a sheer sense of duty. He was known to regard chivalry as an affectation of love-sick youths and frenzied poets.

Conjecture was alive and flew from lip to lip. When, a year later, the quiet marriage on the Continent of Isabelle Waith and Bertie Lowther was noted in the morning papers, even conjecture collapsed and the cunningest gossips, adepts at ferreting out the most closely-closeted family skeletons, acknowledged themselves foiled. Waith's aversion to Lowther, a debauched beau

of fifty, still bravely flaunting the faded remnants of a handsome youth, he had never been at pains to dissemble. What had induced him to throw his pretty wife into the arms of his worst friend? People turned blank faces to the query, and the Waith affair, as it came to be called, was finally accepted as one of those enigmas which crop up from time to time to humble alike the stupid and the wise.

It happens, oddly enough, that I was among the privileged few who could claim to know Isabelle Waith with any degree of intimacy. The degree, to be sure, was not of great scope, but, comparatively speaking, it was something. An atmosphere of constraint seemed to hang about the lady—a vague suggestion, as it were, of the deference due aristocratic birth—which made the adjective intimate applied to a relation with her sound absurdly paradoxical. Waith, after having lived with her for a twelve-month in the more or less intimate relation of man and wife, had never, I fancy, succeeded in penetrating that delicate, vacuous mask, her face, to the soul behind it. It happens, too, that I was the only one outside of the immediate actors in this domestic comedy (tragedy was on the tip of my tongue; after listening to my version of the incident, you can choose your own term) to know the inside story, and I note it down now, after the lapse of years, for the delectation of the world as a peculiarly subtle instance of the modern spirit, quite the finest of its kind I have ever seen recorded in fact or fiction.

I

To my sense there is always something tragic in disillusionment, and so it was that presenting myself at Isabelle Waith's drawing-room a matter of a year after her marriage, the wistful glimmer in the eyes she raised from the uncut volume in her lap to welcome me struck me, in contrast to her prenuptial optimism, as pathetic rather than comic. Even while we were still exchanging the facile commonplaces of greeting her face conveyed to me the rude outline of the situation, at the same time affording me an explanation of her note of the morning requesting in rather urgent tones an interview, and it was more from an egotistical desire to flatter my own perspicacity than to gratify a mere vulgar curiosity that I ventured, when the opportunity offered itself, to touch upon a more vital topic.

"I find you quite happy, I trust?" A wave of my hand comprehended the cool, spacious room, with its costly furnishings, the liveried servants gliding soundlessly about the thickly-carpeted halls, the atmosphere of ease and elegance that pervaded the house like a soothing perfume.

"Happy!" The lady's staccato echo of the word was more suggestive than a wail of lamentation. "Happy with *that man*!"

Surprised at this unexpected vehemence I raised my eyes to her face, seeking there an explanation. She was sitting, my hostess, stiffly upright in an antique bergère, an abundance of brocaded pillows propping her head and back, the lift of her chin (even in her mildest moments her manner seemed to resent an imaginary insult) lending an air of patrician disdain to her pose. Her face was extraordinarily white, the nose high and fine in contour, the lines of the brows and lips precise; a still, cold countenance cast in the austere mold. Her slim figure, her carefully coiffured hair, her thin hands, particularly her feet, all contributed to an appearance of delicate though somewhat frigid gentility, of

traditional refinement, which was at once her chief distinction and her chief defect. A gown so aggressively correct that it seemed to challenge the eye to detect a fault completed the picture. Though the general taste would never have proclaimed her charming, she could not but have a fascination for the few in search of the perfect type. I could fancy her aristocratic attenuation of form and feature (the envious vulgar might have styled her scrawny), a constant irritant to Waith, after the first sense of its novelty had worn off, as a sort of silent criticism of his own broad, blunt countenance and hulking stature.

I assumed the air of shocked incredulity with which one greets the news of unfortunate alliances among one's friends. "Why not?" I insisted. "My mind's eye retains a pleasant picture of a blushing bride, a-flutter among her laces, confidently clinging to the arm of her stalwart husband, an object of general congratulation."

Mrs. Waith smiled across at me dimly and fell silent a moment, her head slightly bent forward in the attitude of one peering into the dark. No doubt my sentimental translation of the actual scene of a year ago, the narrow, old-fashioned drawing-room, shabbily genteel (the ceremony had been frugally solemnized at the house of the bride to save the expense of a church wedding), stuffed to suffocation with a chattering throng, the bride white, cold and passionless amid the general jubilation, so oddly detached in her manner that one might have conceived her a disinterested spectator of the celebration, while the man at her side confronted the long line of alien faces, meeting their condescending smiles, now with sullen anger, as he noted perhaps the ludicrous efforts of his bride's relations to respond to his mother's loud cordiality—if we may trust to rumor, old Mrs. Waith, prior to her son's sudden rise to fame and fortune, had pursued the washerwoman's humble calling in the remote West—now with an air as of insolent triumph in his

acquisition, wrested from a fastidious society by sheer force of his wealth (the modern analogue of the primitive wooer's violent abduction of his coveted mate)—no doubt my florid translation of this scene threw, for her now, into rather cruel contrast romantic ideal and sordid reality.

"I insist upon supposing that such an auspicious union has resulted only in happiness," I concluded, vaguely conscious that banter was not my cue.

Her rejoinder when it finally came had gathered a portentous quality from the pause. "It was a sacrifice on my part," she said briefly, without a hint of emotion in her manner, a quaver of regret in her voice. "My family urged the match, you know."

Recalling the ill-concealed anxiety of Isabelle's family during her engagement to Oscar Waith lest at the eleventh hour something should interfere with the consummation of the match they had so shrewdly planned and assiduously abetted, the bustling solicitude of the mother, the genial vigilance of the two brothers, I felt that "urged" was a mild expression of their attitude; was conscious as the picture rounded itself in my mind's eye of a sense of commiseration for the passive victim of their machinations. Her confession threw her apparently placid, passionless existence into a higher relief, touched it for me with an unexpected nobility.

"You quite astonish me," I felt called upon to exclaim. "So our pretty idyl was after all only the usual marriage of convenience followed by the usual result."

Mrs. Waith threw me a sharp glance, a faint flush of resentment tingeing her cheek. Hers was a nature that preferred polite paraphrase to blunt truth, roseate illusion to crude fact, veneer to virtue.

"Seeing Mr. Waith and me together you must have noticed—" she began, but I interrupted her with my "But I have never seen you together that I can remember——"

"Even that might have conveyed something to you," she interposed.

"And besides, I never notice anything," I added. "It is so rude."

She seemed to divine a determination on my part to relish to the last detail her intimate little drama before proffering a helping hand, and divining it, demurred for a moment, hesitating, no doubt, between an innate reticence, which branded vulgar the publishing of domestic dissensions, and the natural feminine impulse to pour her woes into the first receptive bosom. Presently she turned to me again with that fine air of conferring a benefit which invariably accompanied the vaguest unbending on her part, even though she chanced to be asking a service. I inclined an attentive ear and looked polite apprehension.

"You cannot imagine what I have suffered in daily contact with that man," was a preface to the narrative of the tribulations of the past year, recited in a cold, even voice that struck an odd note between invective and lamentation. It was the usual sordid tale of loveless marriage, the trivial tragedy of two mismatched creatures whose daily communion has degenerated into a long, inglorious battle of cross-purposes, a mere series of small humiliations, fretful humors and peevish discords, heightened in this case by the natural variance of the boor and the lady.

Picturing Oscar Waith, crude, loutish, plebeian, abiding with this frail, factitious little patrician, at first awkwardly striving to adapt his large, vulgar notions of life to her fastidious ideas of the proprieties, to respond to her petty refinements of sentiments and taste, to cater to her vanities and affectations, finally relapsing into sullen discomfiture under her cold, silent disapproval of his blunders, I could fancy some cunning imp, inspired by derision of our marital arrangements, concocting the union to relieve his sardonic temper. Two human beings less adapted to comfortable existence under the same roof it would be difficult to imagine.

"It is, I suppose, what is called the irony of life which prevents us from

discovering our mistakes until after we have dedicated ourselves irrevocably to them," I commented sententiously, dropping into a philosophical vein for lack of anything sensible to say.

"The dullest of my relatives can drone platitudes," returned Mrs. Waith with some asperity. "I sent for you in the hope that you could suggest some practical solution of the present intolerable situation."

"A solution less radical, I presume, than recourse to the law?" I ventured tentatively. The lady's patrician horror of publicity, of the general mouthing of her name by the masses, made me hesitate to formulate the question.

Her reply came promptly and clearly. "I can conceive of no course less radical that would accomplish the desired result." She had the air of having thought it all out, of having determined on her policy before consulting my judgment.

"What would be Mr. Waith's attitude toward such an action on your part?" Her serenity was momentarily troubled by the query.

"I can only conjecture. I have never broached the subject to Mr. Waith. He is inclined to be loud, and scenes, you know, are especially repugnant to me. Besides," she added, as though appending a more or less irrelevant detail, "Mr. Waith is in the South killing birds. I have had no communication with him for two months."

I jumped at my conclusion. "Then you are practically separated already!"

My hostess pointed a distinction with emphasis. "Practically, but not actually. The mere consciousness of his hold over me, even at a distance, oppresses me like a heavy hand upon my shoulder."

"You regard a legal separation, then, as the only solution of the difficulty?"

She seemed to consider again before committing herself to an answer, deliberating. It appeared to me, on the form rather than the gist of her rejoinder. It had the effect of preserv-

ing a certain reticence. "Yes, a legal separation, a *divorce*, is the only solution satisfactory to me."

I threw back the word in wonder: "A *divorce*? In heaven's name, why a divorce? How can a divorce better in any way your present condition? Are you not to all intents and purposes free already—free, while still enjoying certain benefits" (a cursory glance about the room indicated, without indelicate insistence, their nature)—"enjoying, as it were, all the conveniences with none of the inconveniences of matrimony? Obviously you would gain nothing by a divorce—invariably attended, I need not remind you, by an unpleasant notoriety—which could not be effected by a separation mutually agreed upon, if you insist upon recourse to the law, before a referee."

Scanning Mrs. Waith's passive countenance, it was present to me, even before I had quite achieved this declamation, that my eloquence was destined to be wasted. It was plainly her theory that a divorce was the only remedy exactly fitting the case in question, though her reasons for this conclusion, to me at least, were not so evident. She had her moment of hesitation again before replying, again had the air of choosing among an array of paraphrases the one sufficiently esoteric.

"A separation would not, you see, bring me precisely the degree of freedom I desire. It would assure me certain immunities, while withholding certain advantages; it would be negative rather than positive. The prisoner on parole taking his leap in the sunshine in sight of the sentry-box can hardly be termed free."

But I was not to be tripped by a metaphor. "Not exactly the same measure of freedom, to be sure, but still a measure sufficient for what I take to be your purpose," I contended.

"I see the point you make," she conceded thoughtfully, yet her next remark suggested that she hadn't seen it at all. "I mean to enjoy my leap in the sunshine beyond sight or sound of the sentry-box. It must be a

divorce." There was a ring of finality in her voice.

Reflecting on the futility of pitting masculine logic against feminine in-consequence, I bowed my acquiescence. "Yours must be the deciding voice, my dear Isabelle. A divorce it shall be, necessary or not. Of course, I should not dispute the necessity in a case where one or both of the parties concerned contemplate remarriage—" But my hostess's abruptly rising and facing me had the effect of interrupting the remark and at the same time of putting a period, more or less emphatic, to the interview. Mechanically I followed her lead and we stood for a moment confronted.

"I am going to ask you to go for me to Mr. Waith—to try to persuade him to agree to a divorce."

A host of objections rose to my lips, destined to dwindle before her importunity, into mere inarticulate dissidence.

"The grounds for the proceeding can be almost anything (he has desertion, non-support, incompatibility of temper to choose from); only get him to consent," she presently pursued.

I found myself unconsciously assuming with her my acceptance of the mission as achieved. "Of course, I shall do all that I can for you. Still, recalling Oscar Waith's special type, success seems to me most problematic."

She chose to disregard my last sentence. "I know that you will," she said, and she held out her fingers (the occasion lending the gesture a valedictory grace) for my touch. "How rude and selfish and stubborn he is I know only too well. You see, I place great confidence in your wit and tact."

I acknowledged the compliment, awkwardly aware the next moment that the action might be construed as a profession of confidence in the success of the mission, which I by no means felt. Wit and tact would be, it appeared to me, but an ineffectual stone and sling with which to overcome this giant Philistine.

"If I fail it will assuredly not be for lack of—" But she took me up with

an echo of the word, sounded in a tone which quite precluded failure as a possibility—a tone which called up, in the oddest manner, a recollection of the player-cardinal's familiar utterance.

Holding me a moment on the threshold of the room with her eyes she repeated, "You will not fail. You must not fail," uttering the command in accents which turned it into an entreaty on her lips, adding after a troubled pause, "It means so much to me—so very much." Conscious, perhaps, of having touched, however lightly, the vulgarity of melodrama, she resumed, not without an evident transition, her habitual tranquillity, and bade me, smilingly, a conventional adieu.

I left her not a little puzzled by the pathetic little flare of dramatics I had surprised her in (in the light of after events I was to wonder at my stupidity in missing at the time its suggestiveness), perplexed to discover the obscure element in a situation apparently so simple. I had the uncomfortable sensation of being half in the dark, of having failed to attribute to at least one-half of the dialogue its full significance, much the same feeling of uncertainty one experiences arriving late at the play and endeavoring to pick up the threads of the plot amid a medley of meaningless speeches. So it was that I awaited the meeting with Oscar Waith with a certain strained attentiveness, consoling myself with the thought that the interview would supply the missing element, round out for me the situation.

II

THE interview with Waith did round out the situation, rounded it indeed and amplified it so amazingly that a fortnight later, with my finger on the button at his wife's door, I went through the form of fumbling for a card before sounding the bell, employing the time thus gained in composing a polite, vague version of the adventure, a version that should spare, so far as the truth of the case allowed,

Isabelle Waith's sensibilities. The feat threatened to overtax my command of euphemism; Waith had not been at pains to be choice in his phrases; he had aimed to achieve emphasis rather than elegance.

While I still felt the light pressure of my hostess's welcoming hand in mine, I became aware of a third dim presence in the closely-curtained parlor, a slim, black-coated figure, lounging in an easy posture against the mantelpiece. It came to me, in the oddest way, as I entered the room that I was intruding upon a more or less intimate scene; for just an instant the two figures there formed for me the detached halves of an embrace. Of course, the impression could not have borne analysis—so intangible it was that it seemed painted, like a vision, on the air—yet for me it had, arbitrarily enough, the force of a conviction.

"You men know each other, don't you?" Mrs. Waith let drop, crossing the room to seat herself and motioning me to her side.

Lowther—for it proved to be he—sauntered forward, offering his hand with that graceful, easy air of his, the air of the actor following an accustomed cue.

"We meet upon the common ground of friendship for a charming hostess," he said in his smooth, weary voice, smiling and exhibiting a row of very white teeth beneath a pair of elaborately pomaded mustaches. He had undeniably a happy personal art in social intercourse, a rare urbanity of manner, a delicate perfection of tact, unsurpassed in my experience. He was a master of all the minor graces of civilization. Keen-faced, carefully groomed, faultless in attire, by candle-light one might have mistaken him for thirty-five; a less kindly light hinted that he owed his youthful appearance more to the ingenuity of his valet than to the mercy of his God. Taken all in all, he did not belie his reputation for gallantry. It may be mentioned that his popularity was confined to the one sex. Men said ugly things of him; most women raved about him; a few

who had known him intimately were ominously silent.

I turned from Lowther to find myself looking into Mrs. Waith's questioning eyes. "And now for your news—good news, I know," she was saying. Under the unusual strain of anticipation her rigidity somewhat relaxed, her manner flowered for the moment into something like amiability. I don't remember ever to have seen her so obviously eager. We held in common a theory which selected emotional control as the basis of civilization; and she, from this premise, had gradually reduced gentility to a mere state of suspended animation.

There was a slightly awkward pause following her speech during which my interlocutress intercepted my glance in the direction of Lowther, intercepted and translated it.

"Mr. Lowther is in my confidence," she explained briefly in the tone of one citing a fact so evident as to be hardly deserving of the effort of exposition. "You succeeded in finding Mr. Waith?"

"The difficulty was not in finding him," I began; "finding him was only the preliminary to my difficulties. A man who plumes himself on his stubbornness to the degree that Oscar does is not exactly pliant."

"Pliant! 'Pon my soul that's delicious—positively delicious," interrupted Lowther, drawing out his mustache while the remark died away in a chuckle. He had turned from a mezzotint of one of Romney's pretty women, which he had been scrutinizing with an air of detachment admirably adapted to the situation, only when his hostess's reference to him included him directly in the colloquy.

Mrs. Waith permitted herself to lay a persuasive hand on my sleeve. "Please go on with your story," she urged.

Irritably conscious that if my prologue had been palliative, my narrative could hardly stop short of being plainly apologetic, I resented any addition to my audience. Under the circumstances I regarded Lowther's presence as an intrusion—an intrusion for which

I held Mrs. Waith responsible—and my resentment no doubt made me reproduce a more vivid, highly-colored picture of the scene with Waith than I might otherwise have done.

Once fairly launched into it I told the story with a certain relish. There was something positively refreshing to a jaded modern in the man's frank, almost fierce, brutality. It brought with it a breath of the forest primeval, harked back to the days of simple emotion, of strong, virile passions. I let them know how he had received my allusion to the object of my journey with a grunt, jerked out from behind the big black cigar he held in his teeth, how as the full intent of it came home to him he had brought his large hairy fist down on the table with an emphasis not to be misconstrued: "Give her back her freedom, eh? Who's going to make me? Who's going to make me?" It had been of no avail to hint at the fineness of chivalry. "Oh, it's a favor she's asking of me—a kindness, eh?" he had roared. "Well, you go back to her and ask her if she can remember a single kindness she ever gave me—a gentle pressure of the hand, a sympathetic smile, an encouraging word. Ask her that—ask her that, and see what she's got to say!" I had interposed here a pathetic picture of the lady's discomfort in her present anomalous position. "Suffers, does she? Well, let her suffer. I suppose I haven't suffered under that cold, critical stare of hers! I suppose you think I haven't squirmed under the sting of her silent contempt!" His rage had increased with the degree of my importunity; he had bellowed me out of countenance. I had seen that there was no prevailing on him even to hear me out. It was his pride that had suffered most in his intercourse with his wife; she had robbed him of a part of his self-confidence, in this had done him an irreparable injury, and he was the type of man to brood over an injury, fattening his rage on his rancor, nursing an opportunity for revenge.

This much I let them know, enough to vindicate, at least partially, my

failure. But there were passages of the interview which I rehearsed with certain reservations, which for other reasons quite obvious I saw fit altogether to withhold. It would have been quite out of the question, for example, to have quoted Waith's parting shot: "It would have served her right if she had been forced to marry one of the crew of cads she's fool enough to admire—to throw up into my face as examples of perfect gentlemen—some smooth rotten rake like Lowther, say; then I'll bet she'd have learned the value of a decent man!" He had hit on Lowther, I suppose, because he was the sort of man most alien to his own type; they might justly be said to represent in the American range of character the antipodal ends of the pole.

My narrative concluded, Isabelle Waith turned her head away from me abruptly—a stiff, yet intense, little gesture of despair. Emotion had the effect of chilling the white inexpressiveness of her face; the features seemed to harden, as it were, with the effort of repression.

Lowther, with a shrug of his shoulders, which plainly said, "I told you so," returned to the observation of the pretty lady in the mezzotint, the unruffled surface of his back, encased in its faultless coat, seeming to symbolize a superior masculine stoicism in the acceptance of the rebuffs of fate.

I ventured to recall Mrs. Waith's attention, citing a consolatory circumstance. Her head was still turned away from me; her eyes fixed seemingly on something I could not see. "Mr. Waith mentioned an intention of spending the Spring in the West. You will not be troubled for some time, I fancy, with his presence."

Though the remark was addressed to Mrs. Waith, Lowther spun around, taking the answer upon himself: "May I ask, my dear chap, how that will assist our case? We are no better off, not one jot better off, than we were before!"

"Our case! Our case?" I must have looked as blank as a question-mark in the middle of a white page.

Mrs. Waith, a vague blush tinting her throat and cheek, interposed an explanatory sentence: "If Mr. Waith had consented to freeing me I was going to become Mr. Lowther's wife after the lapse of a decent interval."

I tried to mutter a congratulatory phrase while a host of recollections, intimations, suggestions surged in upon my mind. Above them all sounded loudly Waith's parting shot, "If she had been forced to marry a cad like Lowther it would have served her right." In an illuminative flash I saw the solution of it all, grasped the key to the situation, the sword that should cut the knot of Mrs. Waith's dilemma. Here was Oscar Waith's revenge made to his hand—an exquisite, subtle revenge—the ideal revenge he himself had blundered on in his rage. Here for once in an inartistic world was the perfect collision of circumstances!

I was on my feet in an instant with the force of my inspiration crying out to them both: "Why, oh, why, didn't you tell me that before I went to see Waith?"

Lowther laughed aloud in his amazement. "But, my dear boy, you really don't seem to understand! The fellow dislikes me—loathes me, I may say—I'm precisely the type of man he despises most in the world." He cast a careless,

sidelong glance at the mirror, presumably for the purpose of assuring himself that it was Waith's taste which was at fault.

Isabelle Waith chimed in, shrill in her surprise: "Really, you don't grasp the situation! Mr. Waith has conceived a positive dislike for me. I am hardly a type of woman he could be expected to appreciate. I fear he would not wish to make me happy."

"Exactly! That's exactly the point." Even at the risk of offending their respective vanities I could not repress my enthusiasm. "Don't you see that just what I have achieved is *wonderfully* to grasp the situation?"

"Pon my soul I can't say I follow you," was Lowther's ejaculation. The lady simply stared her stupefaction.

In fact, they never did see. Considering their point of view they could not, I suppose, be expected to see. And I picture them, now they are married, sitting face to face in their formal drawing-room, recurring, when the conventional commonplaces of conversation grow somewhat stale, to my accomplishment, and expressing mild curiosity, perhaps even hazarding vague guesses, as to the marvelous method I employed to persuade Oscar Waith to treat them both with such magnanimity.



A CRITICISM

"THE Hon. Thomas Rott dropped in on us at the Sit and Argue Club last night," grimly vouchsafed the Old Codger; "but as he was not in good voice he cut short his remarks after speaking only about two hours and a half."

"H'm!" returned Hi Spry. "What was he talking about?"

"He didn't say."



IT is just as blessed to give as to receive under the mistletoe.

FABLES OF THE FUTURE

A CONFESSION

By Harold Stuart Eyre

WEARIED by the merciless cross-examination to which he had been subjected, and now confronted suddenly with the fatal proofs which rendered useless any further attempt at evasion or denial, the young man broke down and faced the woman with the pleading gaze of a stag at bay.

"I confess it," he murmured in a voice almost inaudible. "I—I have a past!"

The woman regarded him with ineffable scorn. "Ah!" she exclaimed between clenched teeth.

Something in the tone of the simple ejaculation struck a chill to the young husband's heart. He looked at his wife anxiously. "Spare me, I beg," he entreated, "the recital of the painful details."

"I can spare you nothing," was the stern response. "I must insist upon the whole truth."

The young man's shoulders heaved convulsively, but with an effort he regained his self-control, and when he spoke it was with unnatural calmness.

"It is a simple story," he began, "one that in these days is, alas! only too common. I was very young at the time, a mere lad, knowing nothing of life and utterly guileless. Having lost my parents, I was living with an uncle at a little village in Wales—a place with a long and unpronounceable name which I would not weary you by repeating, even if I could remember it. My uncle had been disappointed in love in his youth and was a confirmed bachelor. He was kind-hearted but

narrow in his views, with scarcely a thought beyond his garden and his duties in the parish. I realize now that he was the last man in the world to be entrusted with the care of a romantic and high-spirited boy.

"One morning I was occupying my favorite nook in the woods, absorbed in Miss Alcott's 'Little Women'—I had to do most of my reading in secret, my guardian being strongly opposed to problem novels. Suddenly I heard footsteps approaching and beheld a stranger. It was a tall, handsome woman, lithe and athletic in carriage and with something jaunty and bohemian in her aspect. From her velvet jacket and portable easel, I at once assumed that she was a painter. Alas! why have artists such a fatal fascination for romantic boys!

"She spoke, making some commonplace remark about the weather, and—though we had never been introduced—I answered her. How dearly was I to pay for my imprudence!

"By skilful questioning the painter learned my name and address, and doffing her cap, left me with my heart in a flutter.

"That afternoon I was having tea with my uncle in the garden, when the artist appeared and requested permission to paint the cottage. 'Thank you,' replied the simple-minded old man, 'but our landlord has promised to have it done next month.' I recall even now the artist's cynical smile at the response.

"Henceforth her visits were frequent and our acquaintance developed rapid-

ly, until I found myself in the meshes of a blind infatuation. Judge me not too harshly. She was a woman of the world, much older than I and well-versed in the art of winning a youth's affections.

"One evening my uncle was suffering from a headache and retired immediately after dinner, leaving us two alone. It was then, in the moonlit garden, amid the music of the nightingales, that with endearing words and specious promises she urged me to elope with her. Poor, doting fool that I was, I readily consented. Next morning at dawn I left forever that peaceful home. Never shall I forget my feelings on taking a last glimpse at my little room with the instructive mottoes on the wall and the tiny bookshelf containing my Sunday-school prizes. To this day I recall some of the titles—'The Boys' Fireside Companion' and 'Correct Deportment for the Young.' Correct Deportment for the Young! Oh, the irony of it!"

His voice broke and he covered his face with his hands, but presently he continued:

"We left for Paris that afternoon by the aeroplane express. Six o'clock found us seated outside a café in the Boulevard St. Michel, where for the first time in my life I smoked cigarettes and tasted alcohol, in the form of grenadine au kirsch.

"After dinner my companion found rooms for me in a small hotel near the Madeleine, and left me to seek some artist friends who, I gathered, had achieved celebrity by their impressionistic paintings of Paris in vermilion. Left alone, my better nature asserted itself and I fled into the streets. There I found myself in difficulties, for I knew not a word of French save what I had learned in school from the works of Dr. Ollendorff. But with the assistance of a motor-cab driver, a gruff but kind-hearted woman, toward whom I shall ever feel grateful, I found the British consul and through his aid returned to England.

"I have only to add that my life thereafter was of the most blameless

character and that many were the bitter hours in which I bewailed my folly. Now you know all. Can you forgive me?"

There was a long silence during which the woman regarded him coldly.

"Yes," she said at last, "I forgive you, though I cannot forget. Your wants shall be provided for, but henceforth we must live apart."

The young man turned pale. "How cruel!" he moaned, "how unjust! Since our marriage I have been a devoted husband, with no thought save to do my duty to you and to make you happy. And now, for a boyish imprudence, committed long before I knew you and of which I have unceasingly repented, you would cast me aside like a soiled glove. How can women be so merciless toward the follies for which they themselves are responsible! But you, who sit in judgment upon me, what of your own past? Are there no chapters in your life that you would blush to recall? Have you not often hinted at girlish escapades and chuckled over your early conquests?"

The wife shrugged her shoulders. "That is quite different. It is only natural that a woman should sow her wild oats, and everybody takes it as a matter of course. But when we marry we have a right to expect that our husbands——"

"Right!" he echoed passionately. "What right? Why should there be one law for men and another for women? Why should the world wink at a woman's peccadillos and allow her to go scot-free while the man pays the penalty? It is time we asserted ourselves."

"Enough!" exclaimed the wife. "You may talk till doomsday, but you cannot change the fundamental laws on which society is based."

"Yes, and who made those laws?" he demanded fiercely. "Women, for their own——"

"My dear fellow," she interrupted hastily, "I had hoped that we could discuss this matter quietly and sensibly, but since you appear determined to

make a scene I shall go to the club. You know how I hate scenes. When I return I trust you will be in a less hysterical mood."

She strode to the door, but paused at the threshold to deliver a parting shot.

"I don't know what is coming over men nowadays. Equal rights between the sexes, indeed! If you go on at that rate, you'll be asking next that we allow you to vote."



HIS STATUS

"VIEWING him calmly," began Uncle Austin Ake in his customary grim way, "my nephew, L. P. Lobstock, is a scrambled egg.

"His given name is Lester and his middle name Powhatan. He is twenty-nine years old, and sings tenor. He can play the guitar nicely, and stroll along with a hymn-book under his arm with much grace. He has a lovely disposition and an immaculated reputation. He talks so grammatically that he is regarded as being the possessor of wisdom. He is growing fat—the nice, soft kind, and really looks so much like somebody of importance that you almost feel that you are insulting him if you don't wear a badge of welcome when you meet him. But, all the same, he is a scrambled egg!

"When the cook can't get the egg out of the frying-pan whole she scrambles it. 'Most everybody accepts its condition as proof that scrambled egg was the height of her ambition, but in reality the scramble is a case of false pretense. Nephew Lester has never been a success at anything of consequence except borrowing money from me sufficient to keep him better dressed than I am, and thus maintain a higher standing in the community than I enjoy. He might possibly be a winner at frog-farming, for that's about the only thing he has not yet tried. He is occasionally useful to second the motion, and I s'pose he'd do to count one when the cholera breaks out. He never does anything that I can beat him to death for without running the risk of incurring public opprobrium. And I guess about the only way I can ever hope to get rid of him is to put him up in a raffle or give him away and throw in premium stamps."

TOM P. MORGAN.



FROM THE JOURNAL OF MADAM LEANDRE

MOST people are like impressionistic pictures—only enjoyable at a distance. **MARRIAGE** is the act with which man insures his sweetheart of today against his sweetheart of tomorrow.

POETS are people the best part of whose nature cannot be expressed in living—only in writing.

Do not imagine that the normal people are the commonplace; they are the most unusual of all.

HELEN WOLJESKA

AN OLD-FASHIONED ESSENCE

By Bliss Carman

THE modest and most essential virtues of the soul are like those old-fashioned flowers we used to love in dim, half-forgotten Summers of the past. They sweeten the character that fosters them, and under the magic process of life yield extracts more potent than the subtlest perfumes.

Can there be anyone who does not remember the pitchers and bowls full of pansies and stocks and mignonette, of roses and poppies and nasturtiums, of heliotrope and sweet-peas and lilies-of-the-valley, in odorous darkened rooms of some old country house far away from the noise of town, among the elms and the hay-fields and the silver rivers?

In the early morning the windows, which had stood open all night to blessed cool of trees and stars and shrubbery and drenching dew, would be closed by some gentle hand, and the green shutters drawn against the mounting glare of day, to retain in hall and parlor and dining-room something of the peace and refreshment of the hours of sleep—in the lovely twilight of these most human sanctuaries—while the blazing midday of Northern Summer bathed all the garden world in pure, unmitigated golden heat. The only sound to break that almost solemn quiet was the chatter of purple martens in their diminutive houses above the lawn, or the sharp, thin note of the yellow warbler, as hot and intense as the breath of noon itself, or perhaps the sudden dry clacking of a locust driving his fairy mowing-machine under the spacious blue.

Indoors, in that grateful stillness,

beads of icy water gathered on the brown stone jug on the sideboard, and the scent and color of homelike companionable blossoms filled the dwelling with friendliness and charm. They were still, so delicate, so fresh, so vivid, so eloquent of loving and sedulous care! As their fragrance gave a last touch of grace to the gleaming mahogany and silver of those hushed colonial rooms, the remembrance of them must perpetually haunt the chambers of the mind.

Of all the personal qualities which fragrant virtues go to distill, the most complex, while seemingly the simplest and surely the most irresistible, is the old-fashioned essence we call loveliness.

This fine quality, so easy to recognize yet so difficult to define, does not at once betray to the casual sense its component principles, and we are at a loss to realize exactly whereof it is made. Only after living and learning does the realization come to us that loveliness is distilled from a blending of kindliness, sincerity and comeliness—or, as a poet might say, from the lilac of love, the iris of truth and the carnation of beauty.

The lilac may well stand for the emblem of kindliness. It comes so inspiringly with the opening of the year, when all the forces of the ground are awakening from their cold lethargy and the beneficent earth is renewing her elemental life. In that time of universal joyance and exuberant hope the lilac puts forth her generous beauty to the world, making a paradise of many a dooryard in the Spring. In our Northern Springtime many loved flowers come early to the woods and garden-beds, proclaiming with their

brightness that the season of birds and leaves is here once more; and yet for all the encouragement of these welcome vanguards, there remains a chill in the air, a reluctance in the earth, a flinching in our skins and a hesitation in our hearts. But when the blessed lilac blooms under the window we are assured that the joy of Summer is really at our doors; windows are thrown open, and a warm gladness takes possession of indoors and out. The lilac, like all true kindliness, is so abundant yet so unostentatious, so sweet yet so subtle, so common yet so fine, so exquisite and so hardy! It grows without coddling in the humblest spot, lavishing all its wonderful delicacies of scent and color, all its rich luxuriance of foliage, to glorify the poorest environment; and yet quite as becomingly will it deck the costliest table or the prettiest head with a touch of something untellably rare and precious. The children may gather it in armfuls without stint, while the wisest can never outlive the gladdening magic of its kindly charm.

To the artist, the lover of orderly revelations of truth in shapes of beauty, the iris has always been dear for its stately blending of symmetry and grace. It lends itself more serviceably than any other flower to the exigencies of decoration and design. Its triplicate petals, symbolic of the threefold nature of all perfection and the regularity of law which must underlie all freedom, have been reproduced in myriad modifications through many centuries of art. As the trefoil, it has served to symbolize the trinitarian faith in countless reproductions of ecclesiastical architecture and ornament. As the fleur-de-lis, it is invested with memorable associations of historic glory. Through immemorial legendry its triune flower appears as the mystical symbol of sex, full of occult significance and implications of joyous life. As the common blue flag, it decorates our wilding meadows with a shred of heavenly azure cast down upon the young and springing world of green, beguiling imagination

on many a Summer morning with a strange spell—as of a supramundane loveliness—which always attaches to blue flowers. It is the joy of the designer, giving itself so pleasingly to interpretation of his fertile fancy, and adding its eloquent symbolism to myriad devices in wood, in leather, in pigments, in precious metals and plastic clay. Like a good model, it is not only a convenience, but an incitement and an aid to invention, adaptable yet original and suggestive, definite and calculable yet full of flowing grace. There must be in all triune forms, whether in nature or in art, a profound and subtle satisfaction to the mind, since no other form—neither duplicate, fivefold, nor multifold—so suggests the triplicate and symmetrical structure of all supreme beauty. The pure color and delicate fragrance of the iris, with its simple yet luxuriant symmetry, conspire to make it a fitting symbol of sincerity and truth.

To distinguish between the comely and the beautiful requires some nicety in the usage of words, though any of us will feel sure of knowing the difference, so long as we are not asked for definitions. And while we readily accede the supremacy to beauty, it is still true that a comeliness that is sincere and kind may transcend many unsound beauties. Comeliness, to be exact, differs from beauty and grace, combining something of each of those attributes, and adding and emphasizing certain distinctions and qualifications of its own—serviceability, fitness, becomingness, freshness, and above all a scrupulous wholesomeness and freedom from taint.

As a type of pure comeliness, what flower surpasses the carnation? To the rose, no doubt, must be accorded her unquestioned preëminence of beauty. Her name has been immemorably a synonym for all that is most desirable and ravishing to human sense. She is the undisputed empress of the flowery world, magnificent and unrivaled. But next to her consider the carnation's claim to popular sover-

eignty. Consider their masses of opulent bloom, their long delicate bluish leaves and stems, their stimulating cleanly perfume, their variegated color as they nod in homely clusters in their well-tilled beds or sway with cheery sufficiency from the simplest vase, and declare whether any of their sisters are more comely than they, or can better satisfy that craving for sensuous refreshment which the loveliness of flowers has helped to engender in us, and must forever help to slake.

Loveliness is not perfection. It requires only human possibilities—kindliness of heart, frankness of disposition, fitness of person. It is warm, impulsive, quite fallible, often sad, but never unkind. It does not even affect omniscience, content if it can but secure an acceptable sincerity and fair dealing in the conduct of life. It does not pine for flawlessness, if it can but have faithfulness, painstaking, good cheer, and growth toward a noble dream.

As old-fashioned flowers are simpler and commoner than many over-fostered favorites of the hour, and yet never lose their perennial essence of loveliness, but rather become enriched and endeared as associations and memories gather about them, so these old-fashioned qualities of kindliness, sincerity and comeliness, which go to make up personal loveliness, are not really superseded by any amount of "temperament," "esprit," "style" or whatever characteristic may be in current vogue in the jargon of the hour. The quality of being "chic," for instance, does not include all that comeliness implies; a friend may be "simpatico" (that admirable and delightful trait!) and yet not have all the tonic charm comprehended in kindliness; and no characteristic of the mind can ever take the place of human sincerity. The newer modes, whether in flowers or graces, cannot supplant the old essentials. Fashions change, but the things that fashion life are unchanging.

One is often surprised at finding beauty where there is neither soul nor intelligence at all commensurate with

the physical seeming, and in such instances one instinctively hesitates to use the adjective "lovely" as synonymous with "beautiful." For loveliness as we habitually think of it contains other attributes besides physical ones, being made up of a modicum of beauty, actuated by a generous heart and inspired by an incorruptible loyalty. This subtle composite charm does not necessarily affect us in the same way that surpassing beauty does, suddenly overcoming us by its sheer supremacy and often leaving our riper judgment bewildered and void. Loveliness pleases and satisfies without reservation or reaction. While it is within the power of beauty to astonish the senses, only loveliness can delight the soul and content the mind as well as charm the eye.

To the lover of beauty in old days Aphrodite was immortal and divine, and remnants of her liberal cult may still lurk in our pagan blood, haunting the imagination at times with an alluring spell. The immemorial rites of that worship are not to be revived. Our skeptic days call for a more rational religion. Meanwhile we credulous and practical moderns, still not altogether unmindful of enduring loveliness, might recall the three immortal Graces, offer them sane devotion under their names of Comeliness, Sincerity and Kindliness, and enroll ourselves in the Order of the Carnation, the Cult of the Iris, the Fellowship of the Lilac.

What mainly distinguishes these essential ingredients of loveliness is, that they are all attainable practical virtues, rather than abstractions—human rather than divine attributes. Kindliness is practical love, sincerity and comeliness are the every-day forms of the truth and beauty which we think of as eternal. And loveliness itself is a most human essence, rather than an angelic one. We endow celestial beings in fancy with shining, pre-eminent and supreme perfections, but reserve the livable properties of this-world loveliness for the children of mortals.

Gentle, warm and generous natures

lay a sorcery upon us with a look or a tone, or transport us by a hand-touch beyond the confines of sorrow and dismay, while far more perfectly beautiful but less loving and understanding beings leave us indifferent and unmoved. Time as it passes betrays the loveless spirit and the unlighted mind by unmistakable signs; the eyes grow hard, the mouth unsmiling or mean, the brow sullen or supercilious, and the general mien becomes furtive, dejected or querulous. But the kindly spirits who put love and care into the daily practice of life increase in loveliness as the years go by, and age only lends them a more indubitable and magic comeliness. Their beauty is not the mere insensate mask of appearance, whose flawless hues must pale, its texture change, its lines droop, beginning to wilt even in the moment of maturity, like a soulless flower; it is the subtle and registering simulacrum of the ever-growing intelligence and spirit, whose loving thoughts and feelings it reveals from moment to moment in fascinating and memorable expressions of loveliness. The plainest features grow more comely with years through habits of loveliness—by being made continually the instruments of sincere and kindly lives.

Of all the qualities that can enlist our enthusiasm for a personality, sincerity is surely the noblest and most rare. It is only through sincerity that mortals can attain anything like a permanent tenure of happiness, and come to breathe that paradisaical air in which fearless intelligences dwell. Sincerity is to conduct what truth is to science, what unselfishness is to religion, what devotion is to art, the core upon whose soundness all other worth depends. As a single error may invalidate a whole fabric of reasoning, so a drop of insincerity may vitiate all the effect of an attractive character, nullifying beauty, weakening love, and involving the personality and all its relationships in disaster. It is sincerity that supplies the preservative ingredient in loveliness, that keeps it stable and sweet under all conditions and for any length of time, safeguarding its good-

ness from the insidious inroads of sadness, and its beauty from the deterioration of futility and disappointment.

That comeliness should be so potent a part of loveliness is natural enough, since it is the senses after all that supply the nourishment of our dreams and suggest the trend of our ideals. It is useless to delude ourselves with the belief that the spiritual life needs nothing more than virtue for its sustenance, and may be lived in a state of fatuous beatitude quite removed from actualities. Such a dreary and fantastic conception of existence could only have been devised by the dark, rabid theology of the Middle Ages, that midnight of man's reason. Strange as it seems, there are still here and there fanatical minds which can decry the excellence of beauty, keeping alive the mistaken old cant which declares it to be an evil and a snare. This is no more than an ascetic and fanatical pose, without any real ground of conviction; for we must all enjoy the esthetic stimulus of beauty and feel the religion of its innocent good, unless we are perverted or mad.

But the instinct of humanity is never to be defrauded for long. The sternest Puritan must have felt in his heart that his hatred of beauty was traitorous to honest goodness and at enmity with benign truth. Is not the deep unhappiness in the lives of bigots a proof of the unnatural and monstrous falseness of their doctrines? We need to be constantly trained and exhorted to an honest and generous morality, but comeliness is an unquestionable good which we must instinctively approve and admire. No healthy intelligence can believe that disregard of physical welfare can be other than injurious and crippling to mental and spiritual growth. Our intuitive admiration of the beautiful is too deep and primordial to be other than wholesome and legitimate, and productive of salutary results. And we must make ourselves happy by freeing our minds from the unfortunate notion that somehow personality is to be miraculously endowed with angelic

perfections, through vigorously neglecting to cultivate the perfections that are possible to it here and now—by getting rid of the delusion that our instincts are evil and our senses corrupt, and that the aspirations and purposes of the soul and mind can be best served by meager, inadequate bodies.

The practical cultivation of gladdening and helpful loveliness needs no extraordinary wealth, no exceptional opportunities, no favored habitat or environment, no peculiar advantage of air or season. In any garden of the spirit its growth may spring and flourish with modest rapture and invincible powers. Comeliness glorifies a cotton gown as enchantingly as it does a Paris "creation." One may wear clothes worth a ransom, and still be unlovely, even uncomely—dowdy,

mean, undesirable and ashamed. It costs very little money but considerable nicety to be comely—to be clean, cared for, and in keeping with just requirement. To be sincere and kindly is equally inexpensive monetarily, and more costly in unselfish effort and wisdom, yet not unattainable for the least of us even in a confusing and distracting world.

And always before us within constant touch of enjoyment is that enheartening and sufficient reward for all efforts in self-culture—a sense of our own small share of unequivocal though unobtrusive success and contentment; always about us, the loveliness of life, its blossoms flowering in choicest and humblest places, fragrant and perfect, and distilling for our rapture the potent essence whose pervasive magic makes Eden everywhere.



SERFS

By William Hamilton Hayne

THOSE who live only for the lust of gain—
 Unmoved by mortal wretchedness and pain—
 Are bound in manacles, securely wrought,
 Of greed, aggrandizement, and crafty thought;
 Fettered by avarice, and constant self—
 Soul-paupers, and the hungry slaves of Self.



DELAYS ARE NOT ALWAYS DANGEROUS

CUNNING OLD FOX—Which way were you going, my dear Mrs. Hen?
 SENSIBLE HEN—I can tell better after you have gone yours.



SOME daily papers are beginning to print a department of fiction; others never printed much else.

LE ROMANCERO

Par Pierre Mille

BARNAVAUX, lui dis-je, mettez votre casque!

— Un casque, répondit Barnavaux, pour quoi faire? Où est-il, le soleil? Est-ce qu'il y a un soleil? Montrez-le! Il n'y a pas de soleil, dans ce chien de pays, il n'y a pas de terre, il n'y a pas d'eau. Il y a... il y a la mélasse de tout ça ensemble!

Il était allongé sur la passerelle du petit bateau à vapeur, moitié vedette, moitié ferry-boat, dont la machine poussive nous faisait remonter le cours de l'Alima, en plein Congo équatorial. La sueur qui perlait de son corps tout entier, traversant le vêtement de toile brune qu'il portait à même la peau, y faisait de larges taches humides. Il avait l'air d'une bête forcée, et tous étendus sur cette chose têtue et lente, qui continuait péniblement sa marche en brûlant du bois mouillé qui faisait craquer, tousser, cracher ses poumons d'acier, immobiles pourtant depuis des jours, nous avions l'air de bêtes forcées comme lui. Les chairs ne séchaient pas, sous cette vapeur brûlante que fabriquait l'invisible et infernal soleil. La terre... est-ce qu'il y avait une terre? Les arbres poussaient dans l'eau, des arbres noirs de tronc, presque noirs de feuilles, avec des racines tordues comme des serpents perfides. L'eau? Une encre épaisse et lourde, et grasse, faite de la pourriture des arbres, des herbes, des bêtes mortes depuis des siècles et des siècles. Il y a des pays qui agonisent, des déserts que l'aridité envahit, des saharas, des squelettes de terres qui ont été. Mais on les voit, au moins, ces squelettes, ils ont des traits nets, clairs, tranchants; on comprend où on est. Mais les pays qui n'existent pas

encore, qui n'ont pas de figure, où la vie énorme et confuse est toute mouillée, brouillée, souillée des corruptions de morts perpétuelles, ils sont comme Adam, lorsque Adam n'était qu'un tas de boue sans forme qui s'agitait sans savoir sous le souffle de Dieu. Une mélasse de tout disait Barnavaux. C'était ça et ça faisait peur!

Je voulus expliquer à Barnavaux qu'il fallait distinguer entre les rayons chimiques et les rayons lumineux du soleil, que les rayons lumineux ne lui arrivaient pas, mais que les rayons chimiques... je m'embrouillai. Je savais ce que j'avais à dire, mais les mots ne venaient plus. Il me semblait que mon cerveau s'était décomposé en une douzaine de petits cerveaux séparés dont aucun ne pouvait commander aux autres. Et puis, après tout, chacun pour soi: si Barnavaux recevait un coup de soleil, tant pis pour lui.

A ce moment, j'aperçus, au ras du pont supérieur, sur lequel nous étions à moitié pâmés, s'élevant au-dessus du dernier barreau de l'échelle qui faisait communiquer ce pont avec la machine, un front couvert de suie, des cheveux roux foncés par la transpiration, et deux yeux vert de mer, deux yeux devenus fous, deux yeux dont les pupilles dilatées avaient presque mangé le blanc. La tête continua de monter, puis ce fut un torse nu, bossué de muscles, toisonné de poils, sali de charbon; et Zimmermann, le mécanicien, nu comme un ver, si ruisselant de sueur qu'elle traçait de larges rigoles blanches sur sa peau noircie, fut debout devant moi, formidable de taille, terrifiant d'aspect, la bouche toute tordue et les mains agitées comme s'il avait eu la danse de

Saint-Guy. Il avait voulu arranger quelque chose à sa machine, un tiroir qui n'allait pas. Autant aller travailler en enfer. Il demanda d'une voix enrouée, qui ne ressemblait pas du tout à sa voix ordinaire :

— Quel jour sommes-nous, aujourd'hui ?

— Samedi 15 mars, répondit Barnavaux.

Et il ajouta entre ses dents :

— Bonne idée, de la part du gouvernement, de nous envoyer ici en mars, au moment où il fait le plus chaud !

Mais Muller continua, toujours avec une voix qui semblait venir d'ailleurs :

— Samedi 15 mars : c'est aujourd'hui qu'on va sauter, sauter !

Puis il redescendit l'échelle sans en dire plus long.

Nous n'avions fait qu'un bond jusqu'à l'arrière, et nous le vîmes en contre-bas, debout devant sa machine, tournant les manettes de commandement. Chaque fois qu'il les tournait, un des deux chauffeurs sénégalais, sans qu'un trait de sa figure bougeât, les tournait en sens contraire ; et ils tâchaient d'écarter Zimmermann, mais avec respect, parce que c'était un blanc, et leur chef.

— Quelque chose de cassé dans la machine ? demandai-je.

— Machine, y a bon, dit le chauffeur Dumas, de sa voix d'enfant, toute simple et claire.

— Alors, quoi ?

— Machine, y a bon, continua Dumas en se touchant la tête. Mais chef micanicien Zimamann, y a pas bon. Chef micanicien, y en a gagné fou !

Zimmermann tourna encore une manette et Oumar renversa le mouvement pour la dixième fois. Le géant alsacien l'empoigna par les deux bras et d'un seul effort envoya le grand nègre rouler, presque sous la grille rougie à blanc. Le noir se releva sans jeter une plainte et Samba, le second chauffeur, prit sa place sans hésiter, parce qu'il savait que ça devait se faire comme ça.

Mais Zimmermann grinçait des dents. En même temps, il nous regardait d'un air dont je n'oublierai jamais l'expression d'appel, de désespoir, d'an-

goisse, et cependant de fureur. Il paraît que les chiens, quand ils deviennent enragés, jettent de pareils regards à leurs maîtres avant de leur sauter à la gorge. C'est la lutte entre tous les vieux instincts de dévouement, de fidélité, d'amour, et le mal féroce, la possession démoniaque, qui veut qu'ils mordent et qu'ils tuent. Alors je pensai qu'il fallait que je fisse ce qu'on fait dans ce cas-là—ce qu'on fait quand les bêtes deviennent enragées—et je frémis. Barnavaux frémit comme moi et me mit la main sur l'épaule.

— Non, dit-il, d'une voix suppliante, il n'est pas fou. Ce n'est même pas une insolation. Je l'ai déjà vu comme ça. Laissez-le. Seulement, il faut changer son idée. Vous allez voir !

Il ajouta sévèrement :

— Zimmermann, est-ce que tu ne vois pas que tu es tout nu ?

Le mécanicien se ramassa, semblable à un cheval dont on prend les rênes, ramena ses deux mains sur sa poitrine, d'un geste bizarre et inattendu, nullement militaire, comme s'il battait sa couple, et prit sur le plat-bord son pantalon de toile et son bourgeron.

— Je savais bien, dit Barnavaux, je savais bien ! Il n'oubliera jamais qu'il a été frère convers chez les Lazaristes, celui-là. Il fallait lui rappeler d'abord que sa tenue était indécente. Ah ! ils les dressent, les missionnaires, ils les dressent !

Zimmermann, ayant jeté un seau le long du bord, le retira plein d'une eau sombre chargée de pourriture d'herbes, et se mit à boire à même. Je lui retirai le seau et lui fis prendre deux grands verres d'eau filtrée coupée de tafia. Il tremblait de tous ses membres et nous considérait d'un œil égaré.

— Qu'est-ce qu'il y a ? dit-il, qu'est-ce que j'ai fait ?

Deux grosses larmes roulèrent sur ses joues, non qu'il éprouvât nulle peine qu'il pût définir, mais c'était la fin de la crise, la réaction inévitable, horriblement douloureuse à voir dans ce corps de géant.

— Maintenant, il n'y a plus qu'à veiller à ce qu'il ne se jette pas dans la rivière, me dit Barnavaux. Ça peut

arriver; le sang qui brûle. On se noierait pour se rafraîchir. Il faut l'occuper.

Il poursuivait, toujours assuré :

— S'il y a du bon sens à mettre dans un état pareil ! Toi, Zimmermann, un ancien frère lazariste, presque un ancien curé, passé garde-magasin, puis mécanicien du gouvernement, et honoré d'une mention au *Journal officiel* de la colonie. Pourquoi as-tu été honoré d'une mention ? Raconte, pour voir.

Zimmermann se passa la main sur le front. Un éclair d'orgueil brilla dans ses yeux, et à cela, je sus qu'il revenait à lui : l'orgueil est le sentiment qui distingue le mieux l'homme de la brute. Il dit :

— C'est à cause de l'insurrection de Carnotville, dans la Haute-Sangha, tu sais bien ?

— Comment veux-tu que je sache, répondit Barnavaux, qui avait entendu l'histoire vingt fois.

— Si, tu sais, dit Zimmermann. Avant, j'étais frère à la mission des Lazaristes. Et j'étais heureux chez les Lazaristes, oui, j'étais heureux ! Tout ce qu'un homme peut faire, je sais le faire, moi ! J'ai construit la chapelle. Les briques, c'est moi qui les ai cuites. La maçonnerie, la charpente, j'ai tout monté. A leur station de Bougui, j'étais mécanicien du vapeur, un beau vapeur, pas un sabot comme ceux du gouvernement. Et quand je ne faisais ni le maçon, ni l'architecte, ni le charpentier, ni l'ingénieur, j'apprenais le français aux petits nègres ; j'étais aussi professeur, quoi ! J'avais une robe, je ressemblais à un vrai prêtre, et c'est la gloire ! Mais voilà qu'un jour le gouvernement dit : "Les congrégations ? Je n'en veux plus, des congrégations ! Vous, les curés, demi-tour !" Les Lazaristes sont partis. Je disais au père Mottu : "Qu'est-ce que je vais devenir ? Je ne peux pas retourner en France, je ne connais plus personne. C'est ici mon pays, maintenant ! En France, il n'y a que des blancs. Comment peut-on vivre dans un pays où il n'y a que des blancs ? C'est contre nature." Mais il m'a répondu : "Faites comme vous

voudrez. Nous ne pouvons pas vous garder." Alors, j'ai pris du service dans l'administration et on m'a nommé garde-magasin à Carnotville. Voilà.

J'étais là presque tout seul, avec un petit administrateur de l'Ecole coloniale, un jeune homme bien gentil, doux comme une fille, et qui savait, de son métier, tout ce qui ne peut servir à rien. C'est encore une idée du gouvernement, d'envoyer de Paris, droit chez les sauvages, des enfants qu'on vient de sevrer, pour qu'ils y deviennent tout de suite généraux, grands juges, quasi rois d'un pays grand comme la moitié de la France. Heureusement, la Haute-Sangha était tranquille. Les indigènes de Carnot—des Yanghérés—défrichaient des coins de forêt pour y faire pousser des bananes, ils élevaient des chevreux et des chiens—ils mangent les chiens—allaient chercher du caoutchouc pour l'impôt et faisaient tout ce qu'on voulait. Et, tout près du poste, il y avait un autre village, habité par des Haoussas, des hommes d'une autre race, bien plus riches et bien plus malins. C'est à peine s'ils avaient des champs de mil et des bananiers : de commerce, ils ne faisaient que du commerce. On aurait dit des juifs ou... des Auvergnats.

Voilà qu'un jour un de ces Haoussas arrive dans le village yanghéré et achète une poule à une femme. Pour cent perles blanches, il l'achète. Samara, le mari de la femme, revient et dit : "Où est la poule ?" Et il se met en colère parce que cent perles, ça n'était pas le prix.

Barnavaux se mit à siffler.

— Il manquait aux convenances, dit-il. Les poules, en pays yanghéré, elles ne sont pas aux hommes, mais aux femmes. Donc cette femme avait le droit de vendre sa volaille comme elle voulait.

— C'est vrai, répondit Zimmermann. Mais ce mari-là avait un mauvais caractère. La preuve, c'est qu'il ratrapa le Haoussa sur la route et le tua sans hésiter. Le soir même, le poste recevait une volée de coups de fusil : tous les Haoussas s'étaient mobilisés

pour venger le mort. Et c'était la guerre. Non pas contre nous, mais une grande guerre qui éclatait entre les Haoussas et les Yanghérés.

— ... Sous les yeux scandalisés du représentant de la République française, et à l'ombre des trois couleurs, symbole de paix et de civilisation, poursuivait Barnavaux. Je connais ça.

— C'était aussi ce que disait le petit administrateur de l'Ecole coloniale, dit Zimmermann. Mais il n'était pas comme toi, il prenait ça au sérieux, à cause de sa vertu, et des choses qu'il avait lues dans les livres. Et il disait: "Je ne peux pas permettre! On a outragé le drapeau. On a tiré sur le poste. Il faut aller infliger une sévère leçon aux Haoussas."

Il disait "une sévère leçon" parce que c'est ainsi qu'on s'exprime dans les journaux quand une compagnie de Sénégalais a "cassé" dans la brousse un village de quatre pelés et trois tondus, au nom de la civilisation.

Casser ce village de Haoussas, c'était bien facile, mais alors, qui est-ce qui aurait payé l'impôt? Je disais à l'enfant: "Ca va s'arranger. Il se calmait pour un temps. Mais le lendemain il avait changé d'idée. Il disait: "Je ne suis pas seulement chargé de faire respecter le gouvernement, mais la justice. Et même les plus récentes circulaires insistent beaucoup plus sur la justice. Or, les Haoussas ont raison: ce Mamy Coumba a tué un homme. Il faut que je le fasse incarcérer préventivement et que j'instruise son affaire, conformément aux règles du Code pénal!" Il aurait eu raison si on avait été à Villejuif ou à Pantin. Mais s'il avait appliqué le Code pénal à Carnotville, nous aurions eu tous les Yanghérés sur le dos pendant des années, pour leur avoir donné tort vis-à-vis des Haoussas. Et alors, qu'est-ce qu'ils auraient dit, en France, où ils veulent bien avoir des colonies, mais pas d'histoires?

— ... Une révolte dans la Haute-Sangha, récita Barnavaux comme s'il avait lu le journal. Crimes sadiques d'un administrateur!

— Je ne voulais pas qu'on lui fit des misères, à l'enfant, continua Zimmer-

mann. Je l'aimais bien: presque autant que j'avais aimé ce pauvre père Mottu. Voilà pourquoi, quand il était dans ces idées-là, je lui disais: "Ca va s'arranger!" Et comme ça, je gagnais encore un jour. Mais à la fin, l'enfant finit par pleurer de rage et d'humiliation. Il criait: "Ca ne s'arrange pas, ça ne s'arrange pas, nous sommes déshonorés!" Moi, j'étais rassuré, parce que c'était la saison des pluies et que la pluie calme même les nègres. Quand l'eau fut tombée vingt jours et vingt nuits comme un déluge, il n'y eut plus, pour venir crier le soir devant le poste, que le père d'Ali, le Haoussa qu'on avait tué. Mais il criait de toute sa force. Il disait où était le trou du couteau dans le ventre de son fils assassiné. Il disait où était enterré le cadavre. Il disait que l'ombre du mort flottait au-dessus de la tombe. La vingt et unième nuit, j'allai le trouver, les mains dans les poches, pour bien montrer que je n'avais pas de mauvais sentiments, et voilà comment je parlai:

— Samara, est-ce que Mamy Coumba celui qui a tué ton fils, n'a pas une fille?

Il fit: "Euh!" du creux de sa poitrine, juste comme ils font quand on leur dit une chose sensée qu'ils comprennent.

Je n'ajoutai rien, mais j'allai trouver Mamy Coumba. Et je lui dis:

— Est-ce que tu n'as pas une fille, une fille vierge à donner à Samara, en échange de son fils que tu as tué?

Il répondit: "Non!"

— Mamy Coumba, répétais-je, tu as une fille!

Il secoua la tête, et sa femme répondit:

— Ca n'est pas juste, ça n'est pas juste, de cette manière-là. Nous ne leur avons tué qu'un homme, aux Haoussas, et ma fille peut faire plusieurs enfants!

— Mais, dis-je, si on te la rend, quand elle aura donné un mâle, un seul mâle, au père d'Ali?

— Comme ça, c'est bien! fit Mamy Coumba en réfléchissant. Si Samara veut, je vieux.

Je retournai chez Samara pour lui expliquer l'affaire. Et Samara dit:

— Ca n'est pas assez. Que je renvoie la femme quand j'en aurai eu un fils,

ça, c'est juste. Mais il faut aussi que Samara rende la poule!

C'est comme ça que j'ai arrangé la grande querelle entre les Yanghérés et les Haoussas. L'enfant avait des scrupules. Il trouvait que ce n'était pas administratif. Mais quand le gouverneur est venu, et qu'il a entendu le rapport, il a dit que pour un ancien curé j'étais très malin, et que j'aurais mon nom dans le *Journal officiel*, avec des éloges et une gratification de cinquante francs.

— Ah! dis-je, je connais cette histoire, Zimmermann. Vous ne l'avez pas inventée, l'aventure est bien vieille. Elle advint quand l'Espagnol Ruy Diaz de

Bivar, qu'on appelle aussi le Cid Campeador, mit à mort d'un coup d'épée sur la tête le père d'une fille qui s'appelait Chimène. Car il épousa ensuite cette fille, lui donnant pour raison: "Je t'ai tué un homme, je te rends un homme!"

— Je vous assure que ce n'est pas ma faute si ça se ressemble, répondit Zimmermann en rougissant. Je n'ai rien copié. Ce que je vous ai dit, c'est arrivé dans la Haute-Sangha, non pas en Espagne.

— D'abord, demanda Barnavaux, est-ce qu'il y a une poule, dans l'histoire du Cid?



FROM A MAN'S NOTE-BOOK

FIRST love is the most beautiful thing in life—just so long as it remains first.

A SHORT life and a merry one means a short life and a sad one for your children.

MAKE a living first; make love afterward.

THE man who believes a woman can't keep a secret should ask her age.

THE only way to overcome any evil is to fight it; if you try to put it behind you it will stab you in the back.

THE man who thinks the world is growing worse is generally the man who has just acquired a little fresh wickedness.

REGINALD WRIGHT KAUFFMAN.



FROM A WOMAN'S NOTE-BOOK

MANY people are called firm because they haven't the moral courage to acknowledge their second thoughts.

ONE cannot enjoy solitude until the tortuous paths of society have been explored.

THE woman who buries her mind in poetry may live to see its resurrection in a cook-book.

If you are never guilty of follies you are not quite so wise as you imagine.

Is it wiser to be single and suffer an illusion, or marry and suffer a delusion?

DIANA HUNEKER.

HONEY OF ORCHIDS

By Mary Glascock

"THE decision is final, doctor?"
"I regret to say that it is."
The doctor took off his eyeglasses, and diligently polished them while enlarging upon the technical phases of the case.

Kennison apparently followed him with attention; but red patches burned on his cheek-bones, and he vacantly stared across the light-well at the wall.

The doctor droned on, exploiting different theories which by a subtle process of elimination resolved themselves into his own particular diagnosis, and beamed complacently.

"Beg pardon," Kennison said absently when a question had been forced upon him the second time—he had been counting the bricks in the wall visible from the doctor's window—"I don't much like discussing my organs, doctor. It—it seems a trifle too personal. Like some acquaintances, it's better to be on distant terms with them." He laughed and rose from the chair. "Thank you, doctor"—he held out his hand—"you've been good to take so much trouble. You've given the knockout blow as gently as possible. Now it's up to me, I suppose."

How or why he came to the Country Club he did not know. After a petulant hour at his rooms, temporizing with the issue, he found himself in evening dress on the glassed-in veranda of the clubhouse, seated in a lounging-chair commanding a view of the front entrance. He smiled sarcastically upon discovering that unconsciously he had chosen a protected seat behind the door, and deliberately dragged his

chair into a sweep of draught, in defiance of the first compliance with an invalid's rôle.

Savagely smothering a cough, he lighted a cigarette—smoking was of the forbidden things, the list of which had grown so lengthy that very little a man cared for had escaped its limitations. He shrank from companionship to-night—a man who dodged issues was not fit to face men, he asserted to himself—and answered a challenge to a game of bridge with curt refusal. The ache of his brain fretted him, and he had to be on guard to stifle that ever-rising cough. His sole reason for remaining at the club was the grateful diversion of its noise. For the time, whirl and confusion of sound deadened the insistent interrogation into which his life had been shaped. "What are you going to do about it?" clamored. He had about as much chance as that ugly brown moth beating his wings against the electric light bulb. Watching it curiously for a time, he took it gently in his hand, and dropped it outside the window.

The night air made a tightening in his throat. He threw the cigarette to the lawn where it glowed for an instant in the shadowy stretch of green, and went out. He jerked down the window and with head lifted stood brooding. There was only one way to leave life—and life had to be left. What did it matter if you slammed the door noisily, quickly, or oiled its hinges and closed it inch by inch?

The wail of a violin from an inner room, a note of pain above the musical strife, came to him in harmony with his mood. The shattered chord of life he

understood. Vaguely his manliness protested against this pity of self. It was a splendid night to live! As he looked through the window thick stars already throbbed in the half-light of the sky, and up the tree-bordered drive hedged by delicious scented bloom, automobiles were speeding, making of the way a winding stream of light. Voices, merry and laughing, mingled in soft confusion as each machine whirled to the broad steps.

The big doors swung open and Constance Hardin came in, cheeks glowing from the fresh, cool breeze. Seized by a jesting group she lingered before entering the hallway. Kennison stepped back to a corner of the veranda, and fell to musing over a pile of magazines on a table, while she, caught up by the tide, was swept on into the reception-room.

There had been a golf tournament in the afternoon, and dinner was served rather late, for the trophies were to be first awarded. Kennison had been asked to be of the little dinner-party of which Miss Hardin was hostess, but had refused. He had no business at the Country Club after that refusal; he knew that perfectly well. Glad that he had not been recognized, he started to fetch his coat and hat, regardless of the fact that it was late and he had not dined. Dinner was of the small incidents of life; he could brush that aside. As he reached the doorway Constance barred his way.

"I see that you are going to steal away, Mr. Kennison." She laughed lightly. "I don't intend to let you go. I know that you didn't mean that I should see you, but I did. Aunt Doris is ordering Parker to lay another plate; so, in spite of your 'previous engagement' you're to dine with us. Only the Marstons, Sybil Page—and"—she ran over the list—"a jolly crowd. You may sit by me, and if you don't feel fit I'll not exact a word."

"Really, Miss Hardin—I can't explain—I—I am here while I should be miles away. This sort of thing has ended for me. Some other time——"

"No other time. You're coming.

The reason you're here? Let's call it the moth and the candle. Will you let it stand at that to please my vanity?"

He coughed. Her laughing face shaded.

"Are you ill? You do look a bit dragged. If you're really ill, forgive me. Don't come; I'll tell Aunt Doris."

"I've never been so vitally well as at this moment. It's good of you to forgive my rudeness. It wasn't unappreciation of your invitation. If you'll allow me, I'll be only too glad to stay."

"Do." She smiled. "Everybody's in the jolliest spirits tonight. Sybil Page won the cup; it's a beauty. Come. Oh, isn't it good to be alive?"

The dinner was all that the best-ordered and the best-intentioned feast should be. Kennison had little chance for any but the most general conversation with the hostess, for the ball of talk was tossed from one to the other with unceasing, spirited enthusiasm, each alert to catch when turn was called. His head ached with the effort to keep up, and he grew silent; through quip and jest always the ugly question, "What are you going to do about it?" obtruded. He started when Constance spoke to him.

"Don't you wish to slip away? You look bored."

"Not for the world! It amuses me. I am bored only by—myself."

"Well, be it on your head then. Only, don't blame me if your mind gives way. I wish you to be sane and properly sad when you come to tell me good-bye. I'm off to Paris next week for a long stay. Why don't you come abroad and brush up a bit? The dear old city is in ashes, and you're down in spirits; the atmosphere isn't exactly tonic. Why don't you come?"

"I may." He lifted his eyes to her vivid, sparkling face. "Do you wish me to come?"

"Of course," she said hastily. "Ned Brewster will be there. He's a good companion. The Marstons are coming over later. It will be jolly." She scribbled an address on a menu-card. "Aunt Doris has persuaded father to

let me do everything as I wish. We have a fine apartment. I mean to take the honey of life—and I shall sip it from orchids," she added gaily.

"I see," he said slowly.

She gave him a homeward lift in her machine. A full moon silvered the shrubbery of the club grounds. Tall magnolias with dazzling blossoms cupped in ivory lined the driveway. The scent of flowering nicotine filtered through the air in dizzying fragrance, and climbing red roses, saucily perched on the trellised porch, made splotches of passionate color in the glare of the electric lamps as they turned from the winding road into the level leading toward town.

Aunt Doris, with veil tightly muffled about her head and throat, ever watchful as to possible mishap, insisted upon sitting stiffly at the side of the chauffeur. This vigilance quieted her nerves, and left Constance and Kennison alone in the tonneau.

While Aunt Doris monotonously pointed out telegraph poles to the chauffeur, Constance, with the moonlight playing in teasing shadows over her face, masking the expression, looked at him as they sped along the quiet road.

"Now what is it? What is the matter? I mean to know," she demanded.

"Nothing," Kennison lied valiantly. "Only there are too many moths about the candle; and the primal, selfish instinct of man makes him wish himself the only one near enough to be scorched."

"There would be no fun in keeping the flame burning if there were only one."

"Exactly. Fun for the girl, grilling for the moth. And the end——"

"You're harping on endings tonight," she interrupted, drawing the white veil closer about her face. "It's only the beginning of everything, the wonderful beginning! How glorious it is to be young and live and have everything that the world can give! Sometimes I'm swept away by the intoxication of it. To think that it should have come to me, and not to someone else!"

"Why waste regret on the left-outs?" he asked half-bitterly.

"Don't suggest unpleasant thoughts. I'm storing them in my mind's attic till I get to the chimney-corner age when I'm reduced to rummaging. I know the piper must be paid, but I intend to keep him waiting at the back door a long, long time. Here we are at home! Come tomorrow to see me. Come to Paris."

"Do you ever think that some of us are forced to let the piper in at the front door, and that he exacts his pay?" he asked.

Aunt Doris heaved a sigh of thankfulness when the machine stopped and Kennison assisted her out; each return from a trip in the car was to her an occasion of extra prayer.

"Steal a march on him; let the piper pipe to empty air, and come," Constance said persuadingly, and bade him good night.

Circles lay black and heavy under Kennison's eyes when he climbed the stairs to his rooms. As he dropped a sleeping-draught into a spoon—he had come to that the month before—he repeated her last words, "Let the piper pipe to empty air."

"I'll do it," he said to himself, and put out the light. "Does she care?" Again color blazed in red spots on his cheeks, and he turned to restless sleep in which dreams came to him of Constance, glowing with life, and yet about her always a shadowy mist he could not pierce, holding her from him.

The season in Paris, socially, was brilliant, the weather raw, cold and wet. The beauty and enthusiasm of the girl, in contrast with the coldness of continental formalism and backed by Edward Hardin's millions, judiciously managed by Aunt Doris, who was not timid in the spending, made Constance a success. Her enthusiasm was infectious, and around her was gathered a circle of devotees who made life a long, gay holiday. Suitors there were, many and varied. The light of the candle was at times obscured by moths that winged and crowded, but in time they fluttered and dropped, the moth's

way, and the flame burned steady and bright, with never a flicker of regret.

The rawest day in December Kennison presented his card at her door. It was the time for afternoon tea. Constance liked the friendly English fashion; besides, it furnished an excuse for a serial afternoon, informal and amusing. If one chapter was boring, there was hope for action in the next.

The room was fairly emptied when Kennison entered, and Constance came forward to greet him.

"Well?" she questioned, extending her hand.

"I've bribed the piper to wait, and have come, you see." He looked keenly into her eyes. Those eyes were more worldly, veiled; they avoided meeting his. Her laugh? Was the ring quite so true—her soul? Was he hypercritical? He shrugged his shoulders; he had not come so far to carp. He shut it from his mind, and accepted gratefully the hot tea offered, while acknowledging an introduction to a winsome young thing, who chattered incessantly of Constance, her loveliness and her grand fortune.

Though Kennison listened, a formal smile being sufficient answer to the girl's volubility, his eyes followed Constance crossing the room—a room splendid in the richness of the revived empire. Soft shades of brocade, mellow and faded as an old song, hung from the many windows. The whole apartment reflected harmonies tuned to the grace of an old world, and Constance moved among them, the room a setting to the brilliancy of her beauty. Kennison's cicerone rattled off the names of the notables and volunteered much gossip about the assembled guests. Aunt Doris, magnificent in glistening gray robes, had time only for a pressure of the hand; and Kennison, finally deserted by the girl, who found him unamusing and inattentive, sat, a looker-on at the play before him.

How Constance dominated this splendor! She surely was sipping her honey from the orchids of life. Clusters of these flowers were massed on a table near, the delicate colors blending with

the tone of the rooms, their odd fragrance helping the glamour. But Constance was the passionate red rose overriding this heaviness of hothouse color and scent, the live note in the symphony of illusion.

She stood before him, having detached herself for the moment from a group.

"How do you like it?" she asked.

He hesitated; his eyes searched hers.

"I don't know. It's beautiful, bewildering. I must like it; for a sight of this I'm keeping the piper waiting at home."

"I love it." A thread of challenge ran through her words. "It is life." And she left him as abruptly as she had come.

To her polite remonstrance upon his going he replied:

"I just arrived today. It's a dreary trip over; and it's bitter cold——"

"Perhaps you'd better try Italy—the climate is much softer," she observed indifferently.

"I did not come for climate," he replied shortly.

"Come to see us often," Aunt Doris called after him. "You can manage these French chauffeurs for us. You're a bit of home." She pressed his hand, and thought how ill he looked.

The drive from the Hardin apartment to his hotel was long. His rooms were cheerless, and he rang for a fire. Chilled in heart and body he hovered over the feeble blaze, cursing foreign ignorance that did not know enough to kindle a generous fire, and his weak-mindedness for thrusting him upon foreign ways. His fingers were transparent in the anemic flame that curled lazily, too spiritless to live in this raw, blustering land. He regarded them grimly and shrugged his shoulders. "The piper will be paid," he said.

He did not go to the Hardins' the next day, nor the next; but sent orchids, and with them one splendid red rose. He skilfully parried Aunt Doris's invitations to dine, urging that he was the common sightseer, and must know his Paris before settling down to pleasure. And the climate—he was

not used to rawness after California sun. Then, too, there was a little art student from home whom he had looked up—he had promised her people. She was guiding him to the galleries and theatres, which were distracting and time-consuming.

"Your excuses are varied enough to make their romance a good seller," Constance wrote him one day. "I wish to see the 'little art student from home.' I shall buy a picture, which will be more to her purpose than being looked after; besides, it's the fad to slum among the studios. I should like you to take me Tuesday afternoon."

He frowned at the flippancy of the note, but went at the time appointed. Aunt Doris, who considered anyone from home quite safe, relaxed her dragonship and allowed them to go unchaperoned, reserving the afternoon for a quiet spell of knitting. There was a new baby in a cousin's family that needed a blanket, and she knew an adorable stitch which gadding about at Constance's heels would not let her perfect.

Constance looked across an impressionist study of greens and grays at the painter. Blond and small, with charming dimples flashing in her cheeks, Miss Vane was smiling into Kennison's eyes in an appropriating way, while he was defying all the canons of art in defense of individual half-baked theories.

The thin lines of his face curved into pleasure as he listened to the artist's protests, and, making himself quite at home, he hunted the corner where a charcoal brazier smoldered, while haggling over the potential meanings of the "real" and the "ideal."

Constance felt outside the friendly banter, and, idly turning over sketches, studied Kennison. How haggard and dragged he had grown since first he had come to Paris! At home she had thought him handsome in a big, commanding way. Now—his pallor was startling. And that girl! She was pouring him a tiny glass of wine. That cough was certainly aggravating and disagreeable; it had grown into a positive habit. She tapped her foot im-

patiently. Evidently she had been forgotten in these clever thrusts of theories. He was amusing himself, and the shift of color in the artist's face was fascinating to watch. His profile was turned toward Constance. She started. She had not before noticed the deep hollows of his cheeks, the blue smudges under his eyes, the dulness of them, the despair. She declined Miss Vane's offer of tea and talked of the sketches, selecting one that pleased her, while under her lashes she still watched Kennison sipping the wine.

"Mr. Kennison finds it cold in Paris," Miss Vane explained. "I keep a little wine for his visits. It's good for his cough. Don't you think he looks badly?" she came close to Constance and asked anxiously.

"I can't say that I've noticed," Constance observed coldly. "I will take this one." She indicated a particular sketch.

"I—Mr. Kennison likes that—I don't—"

"Very well. Mr. Kennison, are you quite ready to go? Miss Vane does not wish to part with the sketch I care for."

"You may have it." Gertrude Vane looked at Kennison, who nodded.

"So that is the little girl from home," Constance said, settling herself in the machine and dragging the fur about her throat, shading her face. "A very pretty little girl. Is that why you have deserted our drawing-room?"

"She's been good to me," Kennison answered, "and I hope I've been a friend to her. It's been good to find one soul in Paris who dares to be herself, and—"

"Who does not sip her honey from orchids," Constance interrupted ironically.

Kennison nodded.

They sat silent for a time.

"I expect to leave Paris next week," he said. "May I come and tell you good-bye—not at one of your tiresome tea-hours?"

She turned toward him.

"Why are you going?"

"I've found it doesn't pay to pay the piper compound interest."

He laughed mirthlessly.

"I'm going home, from there to Arizona, where a poor devil can be warm again. I'm frozen by these winds and by you—your people. The little girl back there is all that has kept a spark of warmth in me—and that was only compassion. I'm drawing her vitality from her work, which is life to her, by my demands upon her pity. It isn't a man's part to be pitied; I don't ask it, and I won't have it. I'm going home to fight. When I looked at you this afternoon I chucked the whole thing over; I'm not so sure of my theory as when I started—I'd rather dole pence to the piper, I've concluded."

"What have I to do with your theories?" She raised her eyebrows.

"I'd rather not confess before a witness." He nodded toward the chauffeur.

"Please stop," she spoke to the man. "We will walk the rest of the way. Tell my aunt, Miss Hardin, that I will be home within an hour."

"Won't it make you late for a dinner engagement?"

She brushed aside his sarcasm.

"That makes no difference. Why are you going home?"

"Why?" He looked down at the pavement. "Why should I stay? The last time I saw you alone was at the Country Club at home."

"I remember."

"I had just received my sentence. From the doctor's office I had stumbled to the club, because—using your old simile, which serves my purpose—I was the moth and you the candle. I wasn't sure of the reason then, but that was it. The doctor had told me—pardon my discussing both a personal and distasteful subject—if I stayed where I was or in similar conditions, climate, etc.—that I had only a year to live." Her hand clenched in its glove, but she regarded him with calm eyes. "You, if you remember, probably noticed that I was unusually queer and jerky that night——"

"But the doctor didn't know; he couldn't know," she impulsively interrupted.

"There were several most eminent specialists who agreed." He smiled indifferently. "I was given my choice that day of living as I had been a year or going down into the desert—Arizona or Indio, any such waste—and seizing my chance for health and possible cure. I chose—I came here." A cough stifled further words, as if nature had reserved it for dramatic effect.

"Don't, don't. And you had a chance to live? Why—why did you come here?"

"Because I loved you. Pardon." He saw horror in her face. "I had no right to say it—consider it unsaid. It has been six months since my sentence. I am not sure of my year, and I'm going home to—" A slight faintness made him dizzy. She reached out her hand, but he drew back. "Thank you. I don't need any help—yet. I am going home before that. Don't look so shocked. It's really nothing. I've never found any way of leaving life but death. All of us must pass that door sooner or later. The idea isn't so bad when you get used to it. It's only at first that it's a bit shaky—musses up your nerves. Now I've a memory to take to the desert with me, one full memory to bridge me over the last chasm of life."

"Where are you going?" Her voice was unnatural, insistent.

He guided her to a narrow side street. People were beginning to notice. Her face was fixed, her eyes staring. He wished that he hadn't told her.

"Where are you going?" she persisted.

"To Arizona."

"I shall go with you."

"Constance—Constance!" The cry was from the depths. "Impossible." Silence was between them. Then he spoke slowly, flippantly: "Horned toads and Gila monsters are not a jolly sort for social gaiety. And the honey would be from cactus—bitter."

"I don't like your tone. I won't have it. When are you going?"

"Next week."

"I shall be ready."

"But Constance, I've said it's impossible. You're mad. Do you think, even if you cared, I would let you sacrifice your life? Mine is not worth it; it's only a shred. The last months are not pretty—I've studied the changes. Even now I'm losing control; I'm growing irritable out of proportion to the cause. I've thrown away my chance, of my own choice; I'd do it again. Do you think I am so little of a man as to let you go, to drag you down to minister to my suffering, splendid as you are in your vigor and beauty? Constance, if you think so, you have never known what love is. Mine is strong enough to save you."

"You can't keep me from going. When you go I shall follow."

"Constance!" A great light broke in his face. "You would do this for me? I had not believed it possible of—woman. You know if you go, there is only one way—as my wife."

"I shall go."

"I tell you it is impossible." He frowned. "Don't work upon my weakness. When the doctor told me the truth I made my choice. I've never whined. There was some nonsense about building up waste tissue in the dry climate of the desert if I did not go too late. It is too late, but I'm going because—in the end most men are cowards at heart—I wish to slip away as easily as possible. The end to this has come."

She moved closer and laid her hand upon his arm.

"The end of this has come," she repeated. "We will go."

Dusk had stealthily crept upon them: the bright lights of Paris were blooming like flowers from buildings and streets. The ceaseless trample of feet, the swift passing of vehicles, the swelling roar of countless voices, made of the evening a many-stringed harp swept by the myriad sounds of a great city. A stream of beating, exuberant life surged and swirled, drifting to the cafés, from the opening doors of which snatches of song and clang and chink of

sound rang to the street, the coinage of life spent freely. Glitter and sparkle of light made alive the seemingly unending stretches of streets and boulevards. The hurry and rush of life pulsed unceasingly.

Silently they passed like shadows through this brilliance, walking rapidly toward her home. The man's face was raised to the sky; he was trying to put away the joy singing in his heart, the temptation that urged. The effort of renunciation twisted his features to pain. And she looked at him from time to time, speaking no word.

Constance Kennison stood at the door of a little adobe shack built near a stretch of rail that lost itself, a shining thread, in the distance of the desert, gazing anxiously into the violet shadows that crept over dull, yellow ridges and gray-green of mesquite and greasewood. The orange moon lifted above the rim of sand. About her shimmered the mystery of vast, open wastes, wind-blown sands and great silences. Something of the eternal strength of the unbroken sweep of desert was in her face as she stood waiting at the door. The wonderful color of sand, air and sky poured into the little room beyond her. The sky changed to deeper purple, and through the velvet dark great stars beat.

While she watched a man trudged toward her. With a glad cry she sped up the track to meet him. The light of the stars was in her eyes, color damasked her cheeks; the lazy breeze stirred the bright hair on her temples.

"Look, Philip!" she cried, breathless, her hand on his shoulder.

Through the haze of clinging purple the orange moon had swung high in the heavens. Huge dunes gleamed white on the edge of the horizon; everywhere was the desert, a boundless, waveless sea that broke on no shore, flowing through wideness of silence in the hush of a world.

"Could we ever go back?" She spoke under her breath as if sound might dispel vision. "How blessed that we should have found it! How it

lifts you above the sordid, petty things of life! I love its bigness, its loneliness, its simplicity. It has given you health and strength——"

"It certainly has cheated——"

She put her hand over his mouth.

"Don't say it." She shuddered.
"It's so beautiful to live."

"What orchid has the desert brought to you?" he asked, stroking the hand in his, brown from wind-tan and sun.

"Courage," she answered simply, "to talk with my soul—to find out the littleness of self, the greatness of life."



LA MUETTE

By Allan Munier

IN her hair she wears a rose;
And her fancies no man knows.

In her eyes what yearnings brood!
And no heart shall guess her mood.

On her breast a lily lies,
Matched for pureness in her eyes.

In her hair a rose she wears;
In her heart, God knows what cares.

Like white rose her face is fair;
Petal-sweet her mouth and rare.

Full serene her feet, and frail
For so thorn-bestrewn a trail.

Dreams a red rose in her hair,
And her face is all too fair.

Lily-like her hands, that reach
After some dim ghost of speech.

Passionate the soul that lies
In those mute, entreating eyes.

In her hair she wears a rose;
And her secret heart—who knows?

THE GREATER HAPPINESS

By Harriet Gaylord

A MAN was sitting on the windy seaward ledge at the summit of Castle Rock, in Lynton, North Devon, in the Summer of 1906, holding his London newspaper folded to its smallest readable compass lest he should see it sail away across the Bristol Channel. The afternoon was dull and threatening; the surf clashed relentlessly at the foot of the steep precipice; the crows cawed and called and beat their wings above him and below. It would seem that only one who loved Nature in her wildest and most solitary manifestations would have chosen such a retreat on such a day. This man was dressed impeccably in the business suit of a prosperous American, but looked rather the scholar than the man-about-town. Not large in frame, he yet was wiry and muscular, and the coat of tan above his Van Dyke beard was sufficiently recent to suggest an ordinarily pale countenance. His face was deeply lined; his eyes had the look of one who has learned that he cannot always trust his fellow-men. From time to time he listened as if for footsteps climbing the towering, precipitous crag, but he never raised himself to where he could command the pathway below. Once he muttered:

"It's sure enough. He was listening when I asked the way here. He'll come."

At last he finished his newspaper, and drawing a sixpenny copy of "Lorna Doone" from his pocket, began to turn the pages till he reached the interview of John Ridd and Mother Melldrum, and John's account of the combat between the sheep and the goat on Castle Rock. He read it through carefully, chuckling grimly to himself.

"Thank you, John Ridd," he mur-

mured. "I had an inspiration when I read that last night. Thank you!"

Then he heard the expected sound of footsteps, and, resuming his conventional mask, feigned absorption in his book. As the new arrival, a bland, prosperous-looking personage, came through the archway behind, both men started in well-assumed surprise.

"What luck, Mr. Elkin!" called the newcomer. "I had no idea I'd find you exploring, too."

"Oh, how are you, Mr. Robinson? Glad to see you. I was beginning to get the blue shivers and think about getting back to the hotel." He moved along the ledge of rock to give the other man a seat. "Have a cigar?"

"Thanks. Jolly old rock, isn't it?"

"Yes. Do you know 'Lorna Doone'?"

"Read it when I was a kid, I believe."

"Then you don't remember what he says about this historic ground?"

"Can't say I do."

"Let me read it to you. I had just finished it as you came. The great John Ridd, you see, had come to the Valley of Rocks to consult Mother Melldrum, the witch. He tells the story in the first person, you remember. Listen:

"She pointed to the Castle Rock, where, upon a narrow shelf betwixt us and the coming stars, a bitter fight was raging. A fine fat sheep, with an honest face, had climbed up very carefully to browse on a bit of juicy grass. To him, from an upper crag, a lean, black goat came hurrying, with leaps, and skirmish of its horns, and an angry noise in his nostrils. The goat had grazed the place before to the utmost of his liking. Nevertheless, he fell on the sheep with fury and great malice.

"The simple wether looked around in vain for any way to peace and comfort. His enemy stood between him and the last leap he had taken; there was nothing left

him but to fight, or be hurled into the sea, five hundred feet below.

"Lie down, lie down!" I shouted to him. "The poor sheep turned upon my voice, and looked at me so piteously that I ran with all my speed to try to save him. He saw that I could not be in time, for the goat was bucking to leap at him, and so the good wether stooped his forehead, with the harmless horns curling aside of it; and the goat flung his heels up, and rushed at him, with quick, sharp jumps and tricks of movement, and the points of his long horns always foremost, and his little scut cocked like a gun-hammer.

"As I ran up the steep of the rock I could not see what they were doing, but the sheep must have fought very bravely at last, and yielded his ground quite slowly, and I hoped almost to save him. But just as my head topped the platform of rock, I saw him flung from it backward with a sad, low moan and a gurgle. His body made quite a short noise in the air, like a bucket thrown down a well-shaft, and I could not tell when it struck the water, except by the echo among the rocks. So wroth was I with the goat that I caught him by the right hind-leg, before he could turn from his victory, and hurled him after the sheep, to learn how he liked his own compulsion."

Robinson listened a trifle uneasily, but Elkin seemed so lost in honest enjoyment of the tale that his suspicions were lulled. He leaned cautiously over and peered down to the surf rolling in at the foot of the steep crags.

"A sure way to get rid of an enemy, eh? I suppose it served the sheep right for 'butting in.'"

"Oh, you are American, are you?"

"Sure! Irish by descent, but I've spent no end of time in America. In fact, I made my money mining in New Mexico."

"You look very prosperous. Perhaps you can answer a question I was pondering over as I read in today's paper about the decoration of Dreyfus with the Legion of Honor. Poor devil! I was wondering how he feels. Have you ever been damnably down on your luck?"

"Well, no, not to any great extent."

"You don't look as if you had. Last night when we got into conversation at the hotel, I thought: 'Here's a man who has gone steadily up the hill of prosperity.'"

"You're about right. Good investments at the beginning, you know, and good management for the rest."

"Are you happy?"

"As happy as they make 'em, I fancy."

"Got a family?"

"Yes, wife and two youngsters."

"You didn't bring them along?"

"No," answered Robinson, who was manifestly uneasy under the catechism, though Elkin kept his eyes meditatively on the ocean.

"I wonder," he said at last, "if a man like you can be really happy? You've gone on attaining constantly with no great setbacks. I wonder how your sort of happiness compares with that of a man like Dreyfus, who has been stripped of all things he holds dear, sent to hell and the devil, knowing others were there with him in spirit because he was there and suffering; who has tested the faith of his wife and friends and been brought back from hell at last in a sort of hugger-mugger fashion; then who works quietly until he attains complete rehabilitation and even promotion. He'll die now, a hero to his country, a hero to the world; a monument of man's injustice and man's splendid atonement. What he is now is the product of what he has endured. Would he have it all blotted out for a comfortable, mediocre life of untouched prosperity? I'm really curious to know how he feels about it. I rather think he has the greater happiness. It's wonderful to have been in hell and then to come back and breathe the air of liberty!"

"You're a philosopher, I see." Robinson was watching him curiously.

"Oh, I dare say I'm talking nonsense, but somehow I feel sorry for the people who have always lived in the sunshine. Still they are not the sort who could appreciate the joy of strong contrasts."

"I take it you have known something of the shady side of life?" suggested Robinson. He was careful to turn his eyes away before speaking, but at the short, contemptuous laugh which broke from Elkin's lips he turned toward him again.

"See these hands!" exclaimed Elkin. "The right sort for a gentleman, should you say?"

He spread them out on his knees. It was evident they had never been shapelessly, but now they were calloused and red and misshapen—a strange contrast to the face and dress of the man to whom they belonged.

Robinson whistled with concern—quite as if he had not noticed those hands long before.

Again Elkin laughed in daredevil fashion.

"Yes," he continued deliberately, "you are sitting side by side with an ex-convict."

Robinson started with well-feigned surprise.

"You amaze me!" he said. "How did it happen?"

"Would you really like to wander out of your sunshine to hear a story rather different from your own?"

"I surely would."

The glances the men exchanged from time to time were curiously wary, curiously self-protective, curiously inquisitorial.

"It is not a pretty story, nor, I believe, so very unusual. I was a pampered youngster, born to prosperity, swimming in it, conquering by it. However, I did exert myself sufficiently to study law, and I was admitted to the bar with high honors. I married a girl in my own set shortly after. I didn't work—why should I, with quarterly coupons to burn? Suddenly there was a particularly ugly murder, and without flash of warning I was arrested. The man had once been in love with my wife, and all circumstantial evidence pointed my way. At the first trial I was convicted of manslaughter. We appealed, but the superior courts only confirmed the verdict. Like the wife of Dreyfus, my wife worked to prove my innocence in hope of a pardon. I began to serve my apprenticeship in hell. It was nothing short of that, you know. You can have no conception of my experience. I don't know what other prisoners are, but that was—what I have said. The

daily routine tends to destroy all manhood, to brutalize every impulse. Just let me give you an instance. I had been there five years when some good citizen of influence complained to the Governor, and an investigation of the State penal institutions was the result. I was called before the warden and because I would not promise not to give damaging testimony, I was thrown into the most loathsome underground dungeon and kept there three weeks on a daily diet of a small crust of black bread. Do you see why Dreyfus's story strikes home?"

"I should say I did."

"Yes. Well, at last my wife and lawyers hunted down the real criminal and the coward shot himself, leaving a confession behind. Then came a triumphant acquittal and sunshine, and my wife's smile! You can't think what that town did for me! I was carried from the prison on men's shoulders. Bells were rung, banners were waved, our home made a palace of flowers. All men could do to atone was done, and if I hadn't known man's injustice and brutality, could I have adequately appreciated his generosity and atonement? Ah, I've been living my life over in Dreyfus's day of triumph. I'm in this old world trying to forget; trying to learn to breathe pure air again; trying to enter into my dearly bought birthright of life, liberty and the pursuit of happiness! For, you see, I took those things for granted as a youngster. Until I lost them they had no value. Now do you think you can have any conception of what it is to be out in a world like this—a free man—you, who have known only prosperity?"

"Perhaps not." Robinson appeared to be troubled, even puzzled as though by some unexpected turn in Elkin's story. There was no denying the magnetism of the man who had been speaking. Robinson spoke a trifle stiffly, as if on the defensive. "I congratulate you on your release. It must have been the greatest gratification to yourself and your wife. She is here with you?"

"No, greatly to my regret. She is—would you like to see her photograph?"

"Thanks. Yes."

Elkin laughed and turned squarely toward Robinson, saying:

"I am still her lover, you know—I always carry it in my pocket." He pulled out his handkerchief and, before Robinson could move a finger, his arms were pinioned, there was a slight explosion, a mocking voice said, "Be careful! Don't struggle or over you'll go!" and he inhaled unconsciousness.

When he came to himself he was gagged, bound securely, and lying flat on the ledge of rock. Elkin stood looking down at him with lowering brow.

"I thought you were a damned detective and I had to know, you see. Ethyl isn't a dangerous weapon, but it's a great help to a man in danger. I searched you and find you are only a sheepdog set on to shadow me till the necessary papers arrive. A sheep, rather!" He laughed contemptuously. "You heard me read what happened to the silly sheep—why didn't you take warning and draw your gun? I wasn't sure, you know. If I had found no incriminating evidence, I should have made my humble apologies and departed. But I thought I recognized your hall-mark last night—and, like a sheep, you walked into my trap. It wouldn't do you any good to call out even if you weren't gagged, so don't roll your head like that. I can kick you over more easily than the goat butted the other sheep off, you see. I don't do it, but take my chances on escape. No one will come near this rock to-night; it's too late. I happen to have a constitutional prejudice against taking the life of another unnecessarily. Note my emphasis on that last word, please. In desperation or the case of a great wrong I should not hesitate. Please reflect on the last part of that statement after I am gone if you have any desire to understand what happened long ago.

"To use your own phrase, my friend, you 'butted in'—and it was a matter of life or death to me. I have no intention

of ever being recaptured. I puzzled you a bit by my story, didn't I? Dreyfus? Ah, there comes in imagination. He escaped from hell by the front door; I through an underground passage burrowed out laboriously. He has attained the greatest happiness; I halt at the lesser, liberty, mere physical liberty with a price on my head, but liberty at any cost. Oh, no, the bells didn't ring, the banners didn't wave, men didn't bear me on their shoulders! There wasn't any wife, you know—she died when the man died. In fact, there isn't anything but that one thing left for me to prize in life—just being free to breathe the air of liberty—and with no pricks of conscience at insisting on having my birthright, you understand? It seems to me mere twaddle, men's talk about taking man's punishment as expiation. Such men have never been in a hell of a prison like the one from which I escaped, nor ever felt the inexorable injustice sometimes heaped on the under dog.

"I suppose you were giving me fiction, too. You've had your ups and downs, like every man in your trade, but you haven't been where I've been, or you wouldn't be so glib."

He looked at his watch.

"Ah! I have just time to make the evening train. I've taken your gun, my friend. Don't wriggle about much—your safety lies in perfect quiet. There, I'll leave you the story of the sheep and goat for company until morning. Pleasant dreams! I would suggest that you meditate on whether you have the right to deprive a casual acquaintance of liberty and happiness, and whether you wouldn't better choose some other occupation than that of sheepdog. So glad to have met you. Good-bye."

Robinson listened with regret to the sound of Elkin's footsteps as he scrambled down the rock. Quite apart from any professional chagrin which he felt, he dreaded the long night he must spend alone, with only the doleful cries of the crows for company, and the relentless clash of surf on those dangerous rocks five hundred feet below.

DOG DAYS OF THE DRAMA

By Channing Pollock

IF you will open the Century Dictionary at page 1719, attentive reader, you will find nearly that number of reasons why an article about theatrical productions in December should not be called "Dog Days of the Drama." The Century Dictionary is a weighty work, however, and you would do better to be satisfied with my confession that I adopted this caption without any good excuse for doing so. "Dog days" suggests dullness, laziness, unhealthfulness, and that is always the state of the drama during the two or three weeks preceding Christmas.

In the month that intervened between the typing of my last article and the composition of this one eleven new plays were revealed to New York. Two of these were popular-priced attractions, two others were musical comedies, one died a-borning, and one was "by Channing Pollock." Therein lies the awkwardness of being a creative Dr. Jekyll and a critical Mr. Hyde. I can't tell you my play is good, because that wouldn't be modest or politic, and I can't say it is bad, because you must know that if I thought the piece bad I wouldn't have written it. Therefore, with your kind permission, we'll talk about "The Warrens of Virginia," and "Polly of the Circus," and a lot of miscellaneous matters that may interest you, and that can be skipped if they don't.

"The Warrens of Virginia" was written by William C. de Mille and presented by David Belasco at the Belasco Theatre. It is a wholesome and entertaining drama which, for causes to be discussed later, did not quite

achieve the success expected of performances at 209 West Forty-second street. Only one of these causes is in any way connected with the merits of the play or players. "The Warrens of Virginia" deals with the Civil War, and, in so far as its stage usefulness is concerned, the Civil War is a drug on the market. We have seen so many Southern girls in love with soldiers from the North that this unhappy condition no longer worries us. We sit back in our seats with the comfortable certainty that everything will be right in the end, if the dramatist has to stop the war in order to bring it about. The patter of bullets in the property-room, the clatter of horses' hoofs from the neighborhood of the third entrance, the arrival of despatch-bearers covered with glory and fuller's earth, ceased to interest us about the time that "Secret Service" passed into the repertoire of the stock companies.

Mr. de Mille's work depended for its favorable outcome upon the human appeal made and upon the wizardry of Mr. Belasco. Neither factor was wanting. Into a purely conventional story of "love across the bloody chasm" the young author injected not a few genuine thrills and a great deal of the beauty of every-day relationships, every-day tendernesses, every-day sacrifices. The Warrens are an old family residing near Appomattox Court House, where the two armies are almost literally within a stone's throw of each other. It is in 1865, the Confederacy has reached its last extreme, and the Boys in Gray at Appomattox are at the point of starvation. A wagon-train of supplies is on its way to these

hungry men, and upon the safe conduct of that train depends the ability of the troops to hold out and go on fighting.

Lieutenant Burton, U. S. A., has known the Warrens since long before the war, and has frequently proposed marriage to Agatha Warren. The couple meet inside the Federal lines, and Agatha asks "the enemy" to call at her home. Burton's commanding officer, learning of this suggestion and knowing that General Warren has been sent to his people in an invalided condition, orders the lieutenant to accept the invitation and to allow himself to be captured while under the roof of the woman he worships. There are two roads along which the wagon-train might travel; Lieutenant Burton is to be caught carrying false despatches ordering an attack on one road, so that the foe may determine upon following the other into the trap laid for it. The unhappy swain protests stoutly against being used in this fashion, but yields in the end and goes on his double errand of love and war.

Everything happens as planned. A spy notifies the Confederates that a despatch-bearer is at the Warrens', and Lieutenant Burton is taken in the presence of the girl who has just consented to marry him. This brave young woman, fearful of the life of her lover, complicates matters by concealing the documents in her shoe, so that repeated searches fail to disclose anything incriminating on the person of the prisoner. General Warren, suspecting the whereabouts of the papers, brings such pressure to bear on his daughter that she finally surrenders them, doing with tears and remorse the very thing which her sweetheart has been sent to do. Once he has read the orders, General Warren gets word to the officers in charge of the supply train to proceed along the supposedly safe road, sending his own son with men to convoy the supplies past the spot where the Federal troops, to the full extent of their strength, are lying in wait. The Southerners in the house are overjoyed. Their long fam-

ine is to be relieved; they can fairly taste the food that is coming to them over a route miles away from that thought to be watched by the Federals.

The third and best act of the play takes place just before dawn in the "parlor," where the Warrens, husband and wife, too excited to sleep, sit together through the hours, the heads of the younger children on their knees, discussing the dear, dead days of wooing and the sweet comradeship of their long life together. In the midst of this scene of tranquillity comes the catastrophe. The elder son bursts into the house, wounded, horror-struck. The captured despatches, over the possession of which so much happiness was felt the night before, have proved to be false; the supposedly safe road was heavily guarded; the wagon-train has been attacked, its defenders cut to pieces, the precious supplies seized and carried away. There can be but one explanation. General Warren sends for Burton, who has been locked in the next room, and cross-examines him. The lieutenant admits everything. He is held for the action of a court-martial, and then left to face the woman who, eight hours before, had promised to be his wife—had held up her virgin lips for their first kiss.

The dialogue between the two lovers is wonderfully strong and virile and human. Agatha feels that the man before her has outraged hospitality, established his dishonor, led her into betraying a cause for which she would willingly have died—but even these are trifles. What could war and conflict mean to a woman beside the sacredness of that first kiss? What did it matter if this soldier's visit *had* been a strategy? That amounted to nothing. But the kiss—was *that* a strategy? Were the words of tenderness that had fallen like golden dew on her ears strategies, too? Had it all—the love-making, the sweet promises, above everything else, THAT KISS—had these things been lies? Burton begs her to understand that they have not. Agatha only half believes, but she opens the door and bids

him escape. Burton refuses. He has been a traitor—a traitor to her—but he will not be a coward. He will stay. Back into his prison room he goes as the guard comes to take him to the court-martial, and down in front of that door, sobbing in hopeless agony, falls the little woman whose first love he has betrayed for his country.

A whole scene must be imagined during the intermission between the third and fourth acts. The auditors must see in their own minds the trial of Burton, his condemnation, and the preparations for his execution halted by tidings that peace has been declared. When the curtain lifts at last it discloses a scene of idyllic calm and restfulness. Five years have passed since the surrender of General Lee, and the Warrens, impoverished but content, are living quietly in their old home. Agatha is still unmarried, since the day when, saved by the victory of his comrades, he returned to the North, she has never seen the man who took her first kiss. Burton comes to her in the rose-garden in front of the house, while her father dozes in the sunshine and the music of a solitary banjo drifts up from the cabins. He makes love just as he did five years before, the night of his deceit, but Agatha declares it is useless for him to hope. General Warren has sworn to kill him if they meet, no member of her family can ever forgive that stratagem of the war-time. She leaves him and goes into the house. Then the lips of the father move, though his eyes do not open, and we know that he has overheard. "I hate you," the lips say, "but my girl loves you, and her happiness is everything in the world to me. Go away, young man, go away, but come back—some day." And Burton goes, but we know he will come back. We see the ghost of a girl's face watching him through the window-pane, we hear the strumming of the banjo, and the sunlight falls dreamily on the rose-garden. The curtain intervenes.

It is wasting water-colors on a lily to praise a company presented by David Belasco. This director has the

discernment to pick out the roundest of actors for his round holes, the prestige to induce big men and women to play little parts, and the ability to stage-manage talent into histrions of hopeless mediocrity. Frank Keenan, whose silhouette of the Sheriff in "The Girl of the Golden West" crowned a long series of masterly portrayals, is the General Warren of "The Warrens of Virginia." Without being marked by the striking originality of his Jack Rance, this impersonation is definite, authoritative and carefully contemplated. Charlotte Walker, last seen on Broadway in another war drama, "On Parole," brings her own charming accent to the aid of Agatha Warren, contributing a graceful picture of a sweet, womanly girl, and acting, when the occasion demands, with force and discretion. C. D. Waldron is a manly Lieutenant Burton, Cecil de Mille lends an attractive personality to the rôle of Arthur Warren, and the mother of the Warrens is delightfully drawn by Emma Dunn, who was Peer Gynt's mother with Richard Mansfield. The setting and detail of the production are Belascoish.

It remains to be recorded that the press did not enthuse over "The Warrens of Virginia" with the warmth ordinarily shown to Mr. Belasco, and this fact prompts the dread that the wizard of Forty-second street may be at the beginning of the end of his vogue in New York. The Terrible City is cruel in its fickleness, and ten years is a long time for anyone to occupy a pedestal on Broadway. The genius and skill of a lifetime grow stale to us horribly soon, and we demand new greatnesses that must be the fruits of another career, of another's lifetime. There are only so many octaves in lights, sounds, stage effects, even in human emotions, and when we have heard every tone that may be drawn from the stretch of one man's fingers we turn relentlessly to another man. Edward Harrigan, A. M. Palmer, Augustin Daly, Charles Hoyt and a hundred others survived well-earned popularity in Manhattan. Today we

witness the passing of so well-established an institution as Weber & Fields's Music Hall, and even the Hippodrome, which dazed us and made us proud when it was first opened, required only a single mediocre bill to be temporarily deserted. What wonder if eventually the people who have praised Mr. Belasco for the care with which he makes productions opine that these productions are too carefully made, if the critics who were first to enthuse over his detail discover that detail excessive. It is sincerely to be hoped that this time is afar off, and that the next presentation at the Belasco or the Stuyvesant will be so startlingly excellent as to prove overwhelming.

If you reflect a moment it must seem to you, as it does to me, a sad irony that the men who devote their lives to amusing the public invariably receive harsh treatment from that public in the end. It is an axiom that theatrical managers invariably die poor. There is a strange and widely prevalent prejudice against these purveyors of entertainment, an opposition felt almost unconsciously by the rank and file of playgoers. The newspaper critics, who earn their cake by the theatre and who should approach that institution with feelings of the utmost generosity, grow more and more sparing of their encouragement, suffering from a peculiar astigmatism which seems to make them singularly clear-eyed in looking for faults and equally blind in the search for virtues. I do not remember more than a dozen instances in which producers of failures have been credited with the desire and the effort to produce successes. No one willingly writes or presents a bad play, and it is a regrettable fact that months of ambitious work should so often bring forth the same sweeping condemnation that might be expected had its victim done his worst instead of his best. "On the morning of the day on which I am to have a première," a manager said to me last week, "I wake feeling like a criminal waiting for sentence to be passed upon him. If my offering

happens to turn out badly, I dread looking at newspapers, so sure am I of reading, not words of cheer and inspiration, but the precise sort of censure that might have been meted out had I been detected in a felony."

Nor are managers the only persons who suffer from too scathing severity in criticism. The dramatist who falls short pays the penalty for his mistake with many a heartache wantonly added to those which must always attend the wreck of a long period of hope and thought and labor. Clyde Fitch, who has done more for our stage than any other one author in America, finds it almost impossible to escape sneering comment for weeks after the production of a new play. Charles Klein is now in Egypt recovering from the nerve-racking effects of having presented a drama which did not merit popular approval. Harsh criticism has driven Henry Arthur Jones to the quiet of Southern France. All of these men may have failed now and then, but they have succeeded often, and it is a pity that the exceptions might not have been noted in a spirit of greater tolerance and friendliness than is usual in New York. It is undeniable that the worst performances have commendable features and that these features almost never meet with sympathetic comprehension. A well-known playwright whom I commiserated on an unsuccessful production, returned my note with the following quotation:

"It isn't the shame and it isn't the blame
That stings like a white-hot brand.
It's coming to know that they never knew why
(Seeing at last they could never know why)
And never could understand."

I am not inveighing against criticism, which might be, and often is, helpful and hopeful and stimulating. I am only pleading that it should always be just that. In these days, when it is so profitable to do the cheap and easy thing, when variety and musical comedy draw the largest audiences and bring the greatest financial reward, everyone should endeavor to make it worth while for author and manager to persevere in attempting to do the

fine thing, the creditable thing, the thing most needed on our stage.

There can be no doubt that, all else being equal, it is more desirable that "The Warrens of Virginia" should be a success than such a production as "The Talk of New York," the current offering at the Knickerbocker. Here is a musical comedy undeniably bright and cheerful and entertaining, which does not contain a single wholesome idea or ideal. George M. Cohan's new work glitters with the hard scintillance of the Great White Way, it is saturated with false philosophy and false sentiment. It glorifies gambling, it teaches that love is a purely commercial commodity and that patriotism should be given to the country in which most money can be made. How tawdry and fallacious these doctrines seem when at the Belasco one sees men giving their lives for the old-fashioned idea that the place of one's birth is the place of one's heart—when one overhears a conversation like that of the Warrens who, after twenty years of married unity, sit hand in hand through the night rehearsing the tender details of a sweet embrace, the memory of which has mellowed in half a lifetime of comradeship.

Aside from the faults and flaws in its doctrine, "The Talk of New York" is unquestionably the best work that has come from the pen of Mr. Cohan. Its principal character, Kid Burns, transported from the author's earlier effort, "Forty-five Minutes from Broadway," speaks in a patter quite as amusing and as witty as that which brought fame to George Ade. There is not a dull moment in the whole performance, which moves with agreeable swiftness and brilliance. Several of the musical numbers, among them "Follow Your Uncle Dudley," "When We Are M-A-double-R-I-E-D-," "When a Fellow's on the Level with a Girl That's on the Square," and "Geel Ain't I Glad I'm Home," are pleasantly whistleable and have lyrics of an ingenuity not hitherto suspected in Mr. Cohan. An attractive chorus has been taught intricate and original stage business. Victor Moore,

who is starred in the production, is an actor whose possibilities stick out at the elbows of his rôle. He has a power of pathos unnoticed in any comic opera comedian since the days of David Warfield's appearances at the Casino, and it is not beyond the range of possibility that he may yet be seen to advantage in a serious play. "The Talk of New York," taken as a whole, is a most diverting hodge-podge, which may be recommended to exorcise the doldrums and drive dull care away.

I have had occasion this season to modify my judgment in the case of two plays witnessed in London. "My Wife," seen at the Empire, did not prove as interesting as I thought it at the Haymarket, and "John Glayde's Honor," acted just before Christmas at Daly's Theatre, struck me as being infinitely more creditable to its author, Alfred Sutro, than when I wrote about it after having sat through its performance at the St. James. "John Glayde's Honor" still suffers from three serious faults, but it is an extremely workman-like drama, written with skilled craftsmanship and calculated to hold the average audience in the grip of real absorption. It has exceptionally bright dialogue, several scenes of great tensivity, and a conclusion daringly original and subtly tragic. The Lady Who Goes to the Theatre With Me declares this climax greatly in the interest of public morality, since the understanding on the part of men who woo other men's wives that this wooing may bring them brides instead of bullets would be likely to act as a check to the nefarious practice in question.

The first of the demerits mentioned in connection with "John Glayde's Honor" is the absolute conventionality of its plot. That eternal triangle of husband, wife and lover grows a little bit tiresome after many years, and when the wife is a woman excused for her inconstancy by the husband's attention to business the triangle becomes doubly wearisome. I think few of us have any real sympathy with the Kitty Ashes, the Laura Dearborns, the Annie Hunters and the Diana Stock-

tons who make the bread-winning zeal of their mates justification of an offense against the marital code. The second demerit has to do directly with this lack of sympathy. In Mr. Sutro's drama there is not a single creature who gains and holds the unreserved affection of an audience. John Glayde is a selfish, neglectful lord, Mrs. Glayde is a foolish and dishonest lady, and every other person in the play is conspicuous for lack of those qualities which we most earnestly respect and admire. The third and last weakness of the piece is its utter superficiality. The author flits lightly over the most serious parts of his story, rarely if ever reaching the depths, either of character or of narrative. The undeniable interest of the work results from cold theatrical effectiveness and from the skill shown by the dramatist.

The action of "John Glayde's Honor" passes in Paris in a period of twenty-four hours. Mrs. Glayde is seen first at a dinner-party, where the spectators note her fondness for an artist named Trevor Lerode and hear of the long absence of Glayde, who is described as the head of many trusts in America. This millionaire arrives on the scene unexpectedly, having come upon receipt of a telegram from Lerode's mother warning him of the danger of an affair between her son and Mrs. Glayde. The husband is frequently thrown off the scent in the act that follows, but certain flaws in the story told by his wife keep his suspicions alive. Mrs. Glayde, brought to a crisis by these suspicions, prepares to run away with Lerode, and succeeds in beguiling John by an avowal of her love for him at the moment when he discovers her in the act of going to join her paramour. Learning the truth immediately afterward, he pursues her to the studio occupied by Lerode, who has just heard from a friend such cold-blooded philosophy as has rather dampened his ardor. Then follows the one really great note in the play. John Glayde, finding the lovers together, does not storm or threaten. "Take this woman," he says to Lerode; "she was my wife.

She has made the greatest sacrifice in the world for you. For you she has lied and betrayed. Take her and help her to lie and betray no more." He turns his back and walks out of the room, leaving the couple, already half frightened, looking wide-eyed into a future that can hold no possible hope of happiness for them.

The work of James K. Hackett in the title rôle of this play is far superior to any that he has done in recent years. He realizes the big, square-chinned, matter-of-fact captain of industry as the part was never realized by George Alexander, who labored hard and ineffectively to seem American. Mr. Alexander's studied pronunciation of the word "elevator" was followed in the second act by an observation about his "clark," and in more important respects he failed to suggest the character he was called upon to impersonate. Mr. Hackett has one or two moments of excessive and theatrical emotionalism, and he still swallows whole portions of his speeches, but his John Glayde, nevertheless, is a fine and true performance. Miss Darragh is annoyingly uneven as Mrs. Glayde, occasionally striking one with the sincerity and effectiveness of her portrayal, and again failing utterly where she should be most impressive. The Trevor Lerode of William Sauter is a dignified and intelligent creation, while Olive Oliver, Ida Waterman, Davis Glassford and Walter D. Greene are adequate. Irene Moore is amateurish as an ingénue and George M. Graham makes low comedy of a fine rôle, much as Ferdinand Gottschalk does of the part in "My Wife" so beautifully played in London by E. A. Mathews.

"Polly of the Circus," by Margaret Mayo, was brought to the Liberty in the Yule season by Frederic Thompson, whose genius as a showman, first revealed in the management of Luna Park, at Coney Island, was largely responsible for the prosperity last year of "Brewster's Millions." What the vivid representation of a storm at sea did for that farce by Winchell Smith

was intended to be done for Miss Mayo's comedy by the reproduction of a circus performance. The device probably will succeed again, though the tent show seems rather shiverily foreign to so simple and pretty a trifle as Miss Mayo's play proves to be up to the end of its second act. There a grievously false note is struck, and, as drama pure and simple, the piece does not profit by the ring spectacle which follows. That keen interest felt by laymen in happenings back of the scenes, the charm and mystery of life beneath the round-top, would pull through to financial success a much less creditable offering than that at the Liberty. "Polly of the Circus" is a clever combination of "Lovers' Lane," which it closely resembles in plot, and "The Chorus Lady," possessing much of the appeal exerted by both.

Polly is a bareback rider who falls from her horse and is injured in a little town in which a congregation of narrow-minded churchgoers is ministered to by the Reverend John Douglass. She is brought to the parsonage, where the young clergyman assumes the responsibility for her care, and the show moves on. It would be hard to imagine a more charming scene than that between the Reverend John and Polly when she wakes the next morning and sits up in bed. Polly talks in the latest slang, asks the divine whether he "plays a matinée" that Sunday, and works her dainty way into the heart of her guardian pro tem. In the next act we find that the flock objects strenuously to having a circus rider lodging in the house of its shepherd, and this objection is put so strongly to the girl that she announces her determination of returning to the ring, though she will not give Douglass the reason for her hasty conclusion. It is here that the play strikes the false note mentioned. The Reverend John, though told of this conclusion in the presence of the deacon who has warned him to get rid of Polly and with whom he has found her, doesn't even guess that she is going away for his own sake. Polly, on her part, has no reason, ex-

cept the dramatic utilities, for going away at all, or for attempting to deceive the man she loves. The result of this theatrical device, absurd now as it was in "David Garrick," is bathos instead of pathos, and a spoliation of the impression made by the sweetness and trueness of what has gone before.

Polly returns to the tents, but she no longer rides well, and, on the day that her troupe "plays" the town in which the scenes of the comedy are laid, she falls from her horse again. The Reverend John bends over her in the rear of the circus lot, and, at last, love finds the way.

Mabel Taliaferro, who has done excellent work in various productions on Broadway, is winsome, plaintive and graceful as Polly, whom Malcolm Williams, as the Reverend John, woos in a manner heavy as lead. The best performances in the piece are the clown of John Findlay and the boss canvasman of Joseph Brennan. New York has always known Mr. Findlay to be a fine actor, but whence did Mr. Brennan come, with his authority, his keen intelligence, his virile presence and his clearly-defined idea of character? A dozen minor rôles are adequately filled by a company well selected and stage-managed. The production is above reproach, except in the matter of an excess of incidental music, brought on, generally, by readings from the Bible. This incidental music is "The Spring Song," and the programme at the Liberty says it is by Robert Hood Bowers.

Persons who do not believe in reincarnation may be convinced by the success of "A Knight for a Day," a musical farce by Robert Smith and Raymond Hubbell which had failed twice previously under the titles of "The Medal and the Maid" and "Mlle. Sallie." This offering, shown at Wallack's, is a bit of pure nonsense that often runs to noise and horseplay, but that is pretty consistently entertaining and amusing. Sherlock Holmes himself could not find a plot worth telling in the production, but a great deal of good fun is made by

John Slavin and May Vokes, who appear as a bogus lawyer and a servant lady. The piece contains several tuneful songs, among the number "Life Is a See-Saw," "The Little Girl in Blue" and "Whistle as You Walk Out." The chorus is pretty and vivacious, being effectively reinforced by eight dancing girls composing an octette of the kind made popular by the English Pony Ballet. The staging of the farce is agreeable to the eye, and two or three novel electrical effects are exhibited. "A Knight for a Day" is likely to be a knight for many weeks at Wallack's.

I have explained in an earlier paragraph why it is impossible for me to write critical comment of "The Secret Orchard," a dramatization of the novel of Agnes and Egerton Castle, originally produced at the Lyric Theatre and afterward for several weeks at the Astor. The story treats of the Duke of Cluny, married for love to an American girl named Helen, and residing in the family château near Versailles. Cluny is descended from the Stuarts, and has inherited much of the carelessness and unreliability of that remarkable race. Though devoted to his wife, he has indulged freely in the little gaieties of life. "What do they amount to?" he says to his old friend, Favereau. "Pleasures without a morrow, without a memory; the merest nibble at the forbidden fruit that grows in the secret orchard which everyman—every man of the world; of our world, Favereau—has at the back of the open garden of his life." Favereau, however, wrings from the duke the confession that these seemingly innocuous gaieties have been followed by an affair with a young girl whom he met on the sands of Narbonne. Cluny already bitterly repents this indiscretion, which he hopes to bury beneath a future made up of strict devotion to Helen. The duchess, however, has adopted a young woman, daughter of a notorious courtesan, who has been reared in ignorance of her mother's calling, and who, when she arrives, proves to be the very girl seduced by the duke.

Here we have the elements of in-

evitable tragedy. Cluny consults Favereau and, actuated solely by a desire to keep his wife from heartbreak, agrees to face the intruder with insistence that she has made a fearful mistake, that the man she met at Narbonne was not, could not possibly have been the Duke of Cluny. This lie does not deceive the young woman, whose name, ironically enough, is Joy, but she is frightened into silence, and, sobbing and helpless, resigns herself to secrecy. An illness brought on by worry and misery prevents her leaving the house, where she remains, a constant reminder and menace to its miserable lord and master.

It happens that at this time Helen is entertaining her cousin, an officer in the American Navy, whose sturdy, independent mind, governed by that desire to protect which is known to all strong men, is moved to a great pity for the wretched little girl, known as Joy. This officer, Lieutenant Dodd, falls head over heels in love, and Favereau sees in his devotion a way of ridding the place of the young woman whose presence is driving the duke to thoughts of suicide. Cluny, at first revolted by the idea of palming Joy off on his relative, finally yields, and, when Dodd comes to him for his consent to the match, declares that he sees no reason "why mad'moiselle should not marry whom she chooses." Joy, who has sent Dodd to the duke only because he would not take her "no" for an answer, and who relies upon a last shred of principle in her betrayer, is horrified at his willingness to palm her off dishonestly on an honest fellow, and, turning on Cluny, is about to denounce him to his wife, when the white, sorrow-marked face of that good woman intervenes, and, struck with a realization that the completion of her story must mean untold agony to the foster mother who has protected and cared for her, she declares: "The man is dead."

When the curtain rises on the fourth act of the play Helen is still ignorant of the identity of the betrayer of her charge. Her wonderful faith in her

husband has shielded him from her suspicion. Cluny, coming to their room for a dueling pistol with which to kill himself, meets Joy, who persuades him that "no one can atone by dying; to atone one must live." But the duke is unwilling to start anew unless he "starts clean." Until she knows the whole truth, he bids Helen suspend her determination that Joy must not leave the house. "Come to me when I have heard this wonderful story," says Helen to the girl, "and let me ask you again to stay. If I am not here, rap on my door." Then the blow falls. Helen, broken-hearted, goes to her room, leaving Favereau to play the part of the Greek chorus in predicting forgiveness and future happiness for the duke. "Anger, pain, bitterness, all disappear in time," he says; "love is immortal." The two men disappear together, and Joy, timidly coming into the room, raps on Helen's door. There is no answer. "She knows the truth," says Joy, "and I am shut out." She is not "shut out" from all prospects of future happiness, however, for the preachment of the play, "No one thing in the world is unforgivable," here makes itself heard. The stanch young American, Dodd, declares that he still wants to marry Joy. "I'm not spotless myself," he says, "and I don't think any man has the right to ask what he can't give. It isn't that I don't care about what has happened, but that I care more about you. You don't know how little the biggest obstacle in the world looks beside love." Joy is still afraid of love, and she leaves her courageous suitor, walking out into the sunshine of the lilac garden, while the sobs of the woman in the next room clash against the song of hope and happiness chanted by a negro girl down

the road. "If you're going away, I'm going with you," insists George Dodd. "You asked what kind of a man I am. I'll tell you now. I'm the kind of a man who waits—who waits and waits for his heart's desire." The curtain falls.

"The Secret Orchard" is acted by a cast in which are many well-known players. Josephine Victor has created a genuine sensation by the vividness of her impersonation of Joy, while notable assistance is given her by William Courtenay, a charming young actor, in the rôle of the duke, and Adelaide Prince in the rôle of the duchess. The cast further includes Frank C. Bangs, Gertrude Augarde, Frank E. Lamb, Olive May, Henrietta Vaders, F. Newton Lindo, Burke Clarke, Harry McAuliffe and Edward Mawson, whose portrayal of Favereau is particularly fine.

Cissy Loftus appeared early in December at Daly's in a version of "The Passing Regiment," entitled "The Lancers." The old farce proved too dull an antique to be vivified even by the grace and charm of Miss Loftus, and it was permanently shelved at the end of a fortnight.

At the time of writing the plays worth seeing in New York were "The Witching Hour," "The Thief," "Peter Pan," "The Secret Orchard," "The Warrens of Virginia," "A Grand Army Man," "Candida," "John Gayde's Honor," "The Man of the Hour," "The Round Up" and "Polly of the Circus." Entertaining musical comedies were "The Merry Widow," "The Girl Behind the Counter," "The Top o' th' World," "The Talk of New York," "A Knight for a Day" and the performance at the Hippodrome.



"PAPA, why do we have silent grace now?"
 "So I can swear to myself over the increased cost of living."

THE MATINEE

(OVERHEARD ON THE ELEVATED)

By Blanche Goodman

WELL, Grace Dunlap! How perfectly weird that you should happen to be on this car! Do you know, I was thinking of you this very afternoon, and then to run upon you like this! Odd, isn't it? But then I've been told by a medium that I've clairvoyant powers, and I do believe she was right, because often I have such queer, creepy feelings, just as if something dreadful was going to happen. Father says it's eating lobster salad at night that makes me feel so, but I'm quite sure it isn't that at all; it's my temperament. Father has never understood me, anyway.

Where have I been? Why, to the *matinée*, my dear. The great American drama, "Graft." You haven't seen it! Then take my advice, and simply don't miss it. It's absolutely wonderful. Really, I've exhausted my adjectives over it.

Nell Catesby was with me, and it was positively silly the way we went on. You see, it's a political play—exposes the rottenness of city government, and all that sort of thing. Talk about instructive! I never knew anything about politics before, but now I feel as if I could really manage an election, for it's all so clear to me since seeing "Graft." I do love plays that have an educative value. One sees such a lot of trashy things, these days. But "Graft" is entirely different.

Nell and I actually clutched each other when the leading man came on, looking like a Christy picture, in tennis flannels. You see, earlier in the play, we had mistaken one of the other char-

acters for the lover, and we were perfectly disgusted with his looks—a regular death's head he was, with a stingy little nose. At first I thought I wasn't going to like it a bit—that is, I mean the play—but when the real lover came on—well, everything seemed different. His eyes were *divine*, and he had the cutest dimple when he smiled. Nell and I were fairly glued to our opera-glasses the entire time he was on the stage.

And, then, the women's gowns! My dear, they were dreams. In the first act, the heroine wore a darling gray which I mean to copy when I have my calling costume made. Nell and I borrowed a pencil from a man that sat next to us, and sort of sketched off one or two ideas, on our programmes, between the acts. For the great office scene she wore a tan cloth, trimmed with mink, and muff and boa to match. I wish you could see the hat that went with it. It was the most stunning thing you can imagine.

The political part? Oh, yes, it was perfectly thrilling. You see, there is a horrid, coarse fellow who is the boss of somebody's franchise. Yes, I've learned all sorts of political slang. Well, he acts up generally about something or other, I couldn't quite catch what, because just then Nell whispered to me that she thought the man we borrowed the pencil from was trying to pick her purse, and we were nearly frightened to death. And then we found out that he had merely picked it up from the floor to put it on her lap, as it had rolled down. All the same Nell held on to

her purse like a snapping turtle, and glared at him.

By the time we turned our attention to the play the hero and the boss were having a terrible quarrel—at least, the boss was shouting himself blue in the face, and shaking his fist under his nose—that is, under the other man's nose, like the old brute that he was, until he was downed by him. And in such a quiet, gentlemanly way, too. I always did say that blood *will* tell. Nell and I could have hugged him. From what we could make out, it seems that the boss was trying to force him into running some sort of machine, though Nell and I couldn't quite figure out what a machine has to do with politics. Of course, the hero wouldn't consent; fancy a refined, charming fellow like that turning himself into a common mechanic just for the sake of politics!

Then the lovers get separated through a falsehood that's hatched up by someone or other. You should see

the evening coat the heroine wears in the scene where she denounces the hero as a scoundrel, and everything seems to be over between them. It must have cost a fabulous sum. Her gown was décolleté and she has perfectly superb shoulders. Isn't it wonderful how those actresses keep themselves so plump, what with lack of sleep, rehearsals, and all that? I've heard that they massage regularly with olive oil, though I've tried it myself, and it never did a bit of good.

Where was I? Oh, yes. Then she engages herself to the other man just for spite, and is miserable about it. He was the man with the stingy nose, by the way. Nell and I positively hated him.

Of course everything comes out all right in the end, and— One-Hundred-and-tenth street, did you say? So sorry you can't go on with me. Remember, *don't* miss it. You'll learn loads about politics. *Good-bye!*



THE UNFORGIVEN

By Theodosia Garrison

NEVER for me shall your lamp be lighted,
 Never for me shall your door stand wide,
 Though the ghost may come when the man has died
 To keep the oath that his live lips plighted.

Though a thousand lights on the way be sighted,
 Dark and unhoused one heart must bide;
 Never for me shall your lamp be lighted,
 Never for me shall your door stand wide.

I pay the price of a wrong unrighted—
 I am free of the world from tide to tide,
 But I never may kneel by one love's side,
 Penitent, heart-sick for all I slighted.
 Never for me shall your door stand wide,
 Never for me shall your lamp be lighted.

HOW THE TWELVE BEST SELLERS ENDED

"SLOWLY she closed the window upon which the driving rain was beating, and, pulling down the shade, hid the sight of his retreating figure from her eyes."

"The woman still wore her hyacinths, but the man had lost his soul."

"As the plum-blossoms fell in clouds of pink, he took her in his arms and pressed hot kisses on her red mouth."

"Then the two fled down the dark road, one sobbing and the other cursing, while all night long a tear-stained baby lay by the dead fire."

"Drawing on one glove, Hilda carelessly threw the other over her shoulder back at Meacham, who was watching her with eager eyes. It was her answer to his unuttered question."

"God is good to some men, but to women He is merciless, and He gave none of his pity to Marian."

"'Muriel, my dear,' said the duchess, 'you are perfectly right. The gentleman should return by the earlier train.'"

"The blood-red sun had sunk into the sea, and the sudden darkness of the tropics blotted out all trace of the island. As they stood together looking over the rail, Pierce drew his hands before his eyes and tried to forget both the woman by his side and the woman whom he had left behind."

"Humbled and broken, Judith fell to the ground, bowing her aching temples to the hot sand. The camel-driver threw four pieces of silver into her burnous and rode away into the desert."

"Twice again they met: once on Broadway when Harold raised his hat, and once in Sherry's, when she was with her husband, and this time Harold gave no sign that he knew her."

"The time came when he found himself glad to have lived it all—to have known so glorious a woman, and to have forgotten her."

"He flung the hideous thing away from him and then fell dead at Andrea's feet."

CARL VAN VECHTEN.



The Hit of the Hour, "Richard's Poor Almanack," beautifully bound and illustrated humorous book, sent for 10 cents. Address White Rock, Flatiron Building, New York.

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CLICQUOT CLUB CO., Millis, Mass.

Our Winter Week End in a Motor Car

If you want to forget your troubles take a week-end automobile tour. I, or rather we, did; and I am now wondering why it is not a common, a very common practice among motorists.

It was a matter of getting myself and my mind away from my desk and its troublesome contents. A friendly motorist of the Club had prescribed week-end winter motoring as a necessary tonic, and on a brisk Saturday morning, reasonably early, we threw a couple of suit-cases into the tonneau of my Maja and were off.

New York is not so bad a place to get out of; first, because when you get beyond its limits, you realize after all it really isn't the whole world you thought it was, and second, because its line of egress, northward particularly, along the Drive, beside the Hudson River, past Grant's Monument finally into Broadway, which carries you across Spuyten Duyvil Creek, is a particularly fine one and is marked by a gradual elimination of the things we are pleased to designate as the marks of civilization, which, however, do not disappear entirely all the way to Albany.



THE OLD DUTCH CHURCH BUILT IN 1699 AND THE CEMETERY AT SLEEPY HOLLOW ON THE NEW YORK-POUGHKEEPSIE ROAD

By the time you have got to Spuyten Duyvil, if you come with me on this New York to Poughkeepsie run, the strong wind will have slapped your face into another color and you will have forgotten that you ever had a desk—or troubles. You feel your blood chasing itself through you, like a dog chasing its tail, in a most unwonted and thrilling manner. Buried beneath a mountain of furs, you are warm yet keenly appreciative—every inch of you—of the little touch of whiplash in the air. Above all you are comfortable in no danger of being jounced into a jelly-like condition of weak indifference, for I have a theory

(Continued on page 8)



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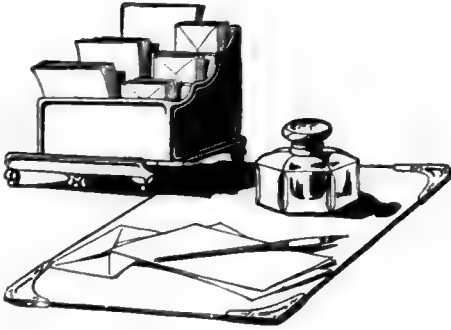
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that light, strong springs, of vanadium steel, I believe they call it, in fact light, strong construction of finest materials throughout the whole car, give one the easiest riding automobile.

Then, too, this tour, you must know, has its historical as well as scenic interest. Sacred ground, every inch of it! I didn't really know that outside of Fraunce's Tavern, Mount Morris, Trinity Church Yard, and a few other such spots in New York, there were any points of real historic interest within or near the city's boundaries. Therefore, I read up on the subject—just a little—on Friday night, and I had such an interesting class in Knickerbocker history—myself teaching myself—that I shall certainly take out a license as instructor and award myself a diploma.

I learned, for example, that the Hudson River was not discovered by Henry Hudson for the Dutch, but by a Florentine by the name of Verazano for the French; how Spuyten Duyvil Creek got its outlandish name (the story runs that one Anthony Van Corlear tried to swim the creek for a certain momentous cause, "en spyt den duyvel," and was drowned in his attempt), and also many another thrilling or interesting or fanciful bit of history. Yes, history is much more fascinating than I thought—especially when it touches on things near at home.

The road we take goes through Yonkers and, all the way to Poughkeepsie, keeps you in a continuous flirtation with the river. Now you see her and now you don't! But when you do, she pays you with a view unparalleled for beauty. Truly the Hudson is the Rhine of America—and something more besides. The brown Palisades and hills on the western bank, and the broad reach of water rumbled by the winter winds—the whole seen in flashes and glimpses, mind you—are fit for the most skilful pencil or brush.



A PICTURESQUE STRETCH, WHERE BRAKES ARE IN DEMAND

Even the most prosaic, matter-of-fact kind of man has an artist tucked away in some remote corner of him, which just such a trip as this of ours will pull out of hiding—provided, of course, tire troubles don't descend upon him! We don't

(Concluded on page 10)



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For Prevention and Quick Recovery

During the "Grip" epidemics of the past
ten years, Orangeine has been widely tested,
with such success for prompt relief and
thorough elimination of the usual debili-
tating effects from "Grip" and hard colds,
that our files are crowded with voluntary
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laboratory for weeks has been many thou-
sand dollars behind our ability to fill our
accumulation of orders. This, in spite of
the fact that we have doubled our force
and have also added a night force.

The following simple directions for pre-
vention and cure of Colds and "Grip,"
condensed from countless successes, have
proved almost infallible:

DIRECTIONS: When you feel that you
have taken cold, or when chilled and ex-
posed, take an Orangeine Powder immedi-
ately; repeat in twenty minutes, and all
further trouble will generally be averted.

To break up "Grip" and advanced Colds,
just before retiring dissolve an Orangeine
Powder in a cup of hot water or hot lemon-
ade. Drink it as hot as possible, get into
bed and keep covered up. Secure free
perspiration if possible.

In the morning, rub body briskly with a
crash towel, dissolve an Orangeine Powder
upon the tongue, repeat every four or five
hours during the day, until all symptoms
have disappeared, and all debilitating after
effects removed.

NOTE: In connection with the above, it is very
desirable to drink plenty of pure water, between—
not with—meals; and in very stubborn cases, the
action is accelerated by taking some common form
of laxative.

Orangeine

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Ills; Offsets Chill and Exposure

Prevents Sickness! Secures Good Health!

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50-cent and \$1.00 packages, we will be glad, on receipt of
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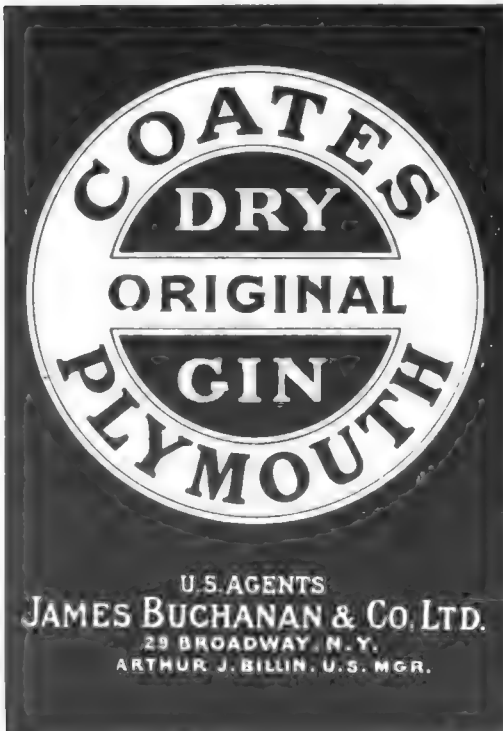
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Have such annoying difficulties because light weight doesn't kill tire (my Maja weighs only a little over 2,000 pounds for its 35 horse-power), and all the way to Peekskill, where, if you please, we will stop for luncheon, through Dobbs Ferry, Tarrytown, Ossining, Croton, and Montrose, along a road which skirts the widest part of the Hudson called Tappan Zee, we can be dreamers and artists and poets.

Beyond Peekskill, just after going through Annsville and past the State Camp, where the State Militia holds forth every summer, the road runs through a fine bit of wooded country in a not too straight road—one which enjoins caution in driving. Soon you run through Garrison and Cold Spring, where you either keep to the river road through Fishkill Landing to Wappinger's Falls, or strike out for Fishkill Village by keeping to the right-hand road out of Cold Spring, which skirts Fishkill Mountain, eventually landing you in Wappinger's Falls. A few miles more and you are in Poughkeepsie, quite pleased that you have beaten out the snow-storm which all the afternoon has been sending little fleecy heralds to warn you of its coming.

The next morning—Sunday—you peep out of the window and see Nature asleep under a clean white sheet. Can we make New York today? you ask. Of course we can—with the help of tire chains—for there is certainly power enough, and not too much weight, in my Maja to get even to the spot Peary is trying for. We start, retracing our way, more slowly and cautiously, for driving through snow has another feature—a very annoying one—as it prevents you seeing the ruts and “thank you marms,” as we called them when I was a boy—in the road-bed. We passed without mishap through Peekskill, Tarrytown, Yonkers, reaching the metropolis a little before nightfall. Now for a meal—not a fine epicurean repast for a dainty tooth, but one of the hearty, beefy, substantial kind you have read about in a description of the old English coaching days which “mine host” of the “Green Dragon” serves to his hungry guests.

Enjoyed your trip? Of course you have. You have red blood in your veins which the two days' wintry motoring has made so much redder that its color now actually shows through your skin.

“By the way,” you say to me sententiously, as we rise from the table to say good night, “delightful two days. Good car; no trouble; delightful. When are you going again?”

You are still waiting for my answer? Well, you see, I have other friends.



[This is the first of a series of articles, each descriptive of a short automobile tour through an interesting and historical country—which will appear monthly in THE SMART SET.]

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after bathing and after shaving keeps the skin smooth and healthy. It not only heals but soothes all Chapping, Chafing, and skin troubles of winter and summer. It is indispensable in the nursery.

For your protection the genuine is put up in non-refillable boxes the "Box that Lox," with Mennen's face on top. Guaranteed under the Food and Drugs Act, June 30, 1906. Serial No. 1542. Sold everywhere, or by mail, 25 cents. Sample Free.

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LIES FLAT TO THE LEG—NEVER
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SOOTHES the CHILD, SOFTENS
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THE HUMAN MOULD Causes Rejoicing Among Stout Women

APPARATUS MOULDS LIVING FLESH

**Dr. Thomas' Discovery Permanently Reducing Hips, Lengthening
Waist and also giving Style, Grace and Power**

By the use of this apparatus you can eat as much as you please; growing thinner, stronger and more graceful each day, in place of growing fatter and more awkward. The apparatus fits the body perfectly. It is attached to the spring which is fastened to a board upon which you stand. By simply bending and straightening the knees an enormous force is exerted. This force is used to MELT FAT, REDUCE WEIGHT, STRENGTHEN and BEAUTIFY the body. The hips in some cases are reduced at the rate of two inches a week, and the beauty about it is the reduction is permanent. You can readily appreciate how forceful the apparatus must be when in a few minutes an ordinary sized woman by its aid can lift 100,000 pounds. Dr. Julian P. Thomas, the inventor, is known the world over as a food specialist (and aeronaut). He also holds the world's record for heavy weight endurance lifting, having lifted 1,257,000 pounds in thirty minutes. The Human Mould is designed to be used for a few minutes at a time, morning and night. The alternate knee bending and straightening, deep breathing, and erect carriage which its use necessitates, have a wonderful, immediate and lasting effect on the form, energy and health of the user. Dormant fat, which simply represents surplus food energy, is melted and converted into red blood and live, firm muscles. The form is perfected and the graceful slender outlines of youth recovered.

PRINCIPLE OF ACTION. Besides melting fat the Human Mould works upon the combined principles of **Massage, Vibration and Strenuous Exercise**, but is so **Scientific** that their objections are avoided, their good points intensified manifold.



Bending

A lady who has used this wonderful apparatus writes as follows:

"DEAR DOCTOR:

If you had known me and saw me now, you would hardly recognize me, my appearance and style having changed so much. My dress-maker says she never saw anything like it. She is ordering one for herself and is recommending them to all her friends; especially those whose hips and waists are growing too large. She says, 'that I look ten years younger.' I know that there has been a great change. I now have no difficulty in getting ready-made clothing. I surely feel much lighter and am so glad that I do not have to diet, take strong medicines or waste any spare time in walking or working. All of my internal functions are so much better that I inquired of my doctor to explain the matter to me, and he said, 'The fat has been pressing upon vital organs, devitalizing them. Now they are free to perform their functions properly. It is no wonder you look so much better.' This must be true, for now I am stronger than my brother, who is a member of a gymnasium. He thinks more of me now and has stopped calling me JUMBO. Of his own accord he has secured the agency for the Mould and introduced it into his Athletic Club where the fat boys use it to reduce their weight and the strong ones to grow stronger."

Mr. John Brock, who has tried it, writes:

"MY DEAR DOCTOR:

I am lifting about 100,000 pounds morning and afternoon. This usually takes ten minutes' time. At the end of this time I am all aglow, ready for my day's work in the morning or for a restful sleep in the evening. I now sleep well, eat well and do my work well. My complexion has improved wonderfully. My waist is growing smaller and my chest and muscles are larger. My entire organization seems to be growing more vital. You remember when I started the use of the Human Mould, I was so run down. I would not take \$100 for the Human Mould. I cannot thank you enough. I am sending this letter to you by a friend who wishes to get the Human Mould for himself and his wife. I told them they both could use the same apparatus. He is weak and she is fat.

Yours truly,

JOHN BROCK."



Straightening

In the opinion of the writer, all readers of this paper who wish to **reduce their weight, lengthen waist, reduce hips, improve circulation, strengthen organization, sleep well, eat well, feel well and remain well** should order an apparatus at once.

For Women: Reduces fleshy hips and waist one to two inches a week; gives grace of carriage and robust, beautiful health.

For Men: Turns fat into muscle; strengthens and squares shoulders; builds the body strong against disease.

Makes women as strong as athletes; men as strong as giants.

(Five Days' Trial)

FILL IN AND MAIL THIS COUPON

Dr. Julian P. Thomas
Dept. 15, No. 522 W. 37th St., New York.

Enclosed find \$10.00 for which please send me on five days' trial, one Human Mould and instructions for use. If not entirely satisfactory when used according to directions I am to return it within five days, express collect, and you are to refund the \$10.00.

Name.....

Street and No.....

P. O..... State.....

Height..... Weight.....

Waist..... Hips.....

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FOR LADIES**

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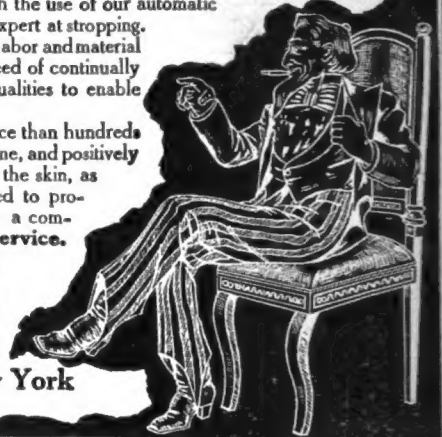
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